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CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES.

CHAUCER.

(FROM THE HARLEIAN MS. 4866.)

CHAUCER'S
CANTERBURY TALES

ANNOTATED AND ACCENTED,

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS OF ENGLISH LIFE

IN CHAUCER'S TIME

BY

JOHN SAUNDERS

New and Revised Edition

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.

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TO

FREDERICK J. FURNIVALL, M.A., CAMB.,

Hon. Dr. Phil. Berlin, Founder and Director of the Chaucer, Wyclif, Early English Text, New Shakspere, and other Societies,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE DEDICATED IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF HIS WORK ON CHAUCER,

AND HIS HELP IN THE PRESENT REVISION.

JOHN SAUNDERS.

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A page to the wife of Prince Lionel, 1357.
Begins his military career with Edward III. in the invasion of France, and is taken prisoner, 1359 ; is ransomed in 1360.
In the king's service, 1361.
His wife, Philippa, one of the ladies in attendance on Queen Philippa, assigned a pension of 10 marks, 1366.

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Receives an annual pension of 20 marks, 1367.
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Employed by the king on a mission to Pisa and Genoa, 1372.
His *Lyfe of St. Cecile*, 1373.
A pitcher of wine daily granted to him, 1374.
Appointed Comptroller of the Customs and Subsidy of Wools, Skins, and Tanned Hides, 1374.
His poem of *The Compleynt of Mars*, 1374.
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His prose englishing of *Boece*, poem of *The Former Age*, &c., 1377.
Compromises his *raptus* of Cecilia Chaumpagne, 1380.
His poem of *The Parlament of Foules*, 1381.
Appointed Comptroller of the Petty Customs of Wines, &c. 1382.
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Sits in Parliament as Knight of the Shire for Kent, 1386.
Dismissed as Comptroller of Wool and Petty Customs, 1386.
His poem of *Truth*, 1386.
Some of the *Canterbury Tales* written, 1387 ; others up to 1400.
His wife, Philippa, dies, 1387.
At his own request his pensions are assigned to John Scalby, 1388.
Is appointed Clerk of the King's Works at Westminster, 1389, and at Windsor, 1390.
Sees to the repair of banks of the Thames ; puts up joust stands in Smithfield for the King and Queen, 1390.
Is robbed of £20 of the King's money, 6 Sept., 1390.
Is appointed joint Forester of N. Petherton, 1391 ; sole one, 1398.
His *Astrolabe*, 1391 ; loses his Clerkships of the Works.
Receives a pension of £20 a year for life, 1394.
His latest Minor Poems, 1392-1398.
A tun of wine yearly granted to him, 1398.
Is sued by Mrs. Buckholt, for £14 1*s.* 11*d.*, 1398.
Gets protection from suits of law, sends his *Purse Poem* to the new King Henry IV., 1399.
His pension doubled, 1399.
Covenants for 53 years lease of a house in the garden of the Chapel of St. Mary, Westminster, December, 1399.
Dies, at Westminster, 1400.

PROLOGUE.

CANTERBURY TALES

FROM CHAUCER.

INTRODUCTION.

AS it was only in the first half of the present century, the discovery was made that the most popular of English poets, Shakspere, had been very inadequately appreciated, one need not be surprised to find at the present day, there is another poet hardly less fitted for popularity, and belonging to the same mighty class of originators, whose works are seldom seen but in the hand of the literary student, or on the shelves of the well-appointed library.

But why is it that Chaucer has been thus neglected in his own country? Not, certainly, on account of his occasional grossness; for all his serious tales, and some of his humorous, are unobjectionable on this score. Neither do we think that it is owing to any *inherent* or *irremediable* difficulties connected with Chaucer's verse; though were these as real as is commonly assumed, there would be what we may term great poetical injustice in doing so little for Chaucer, who has done almost everything for us; who not only created for us a national poetry, but restored to us a national tongue. The fact is, we believe, simply this—that the people, the many, who, added to the "few," form the only "fit" audience for so robust and comprehensive an intellect as Chaucer's, have, in truth, had no opportunities of making his acquaintance. The works of Chaucer have been beyond their ready intellectual comprehension, on account of their antique garb: hence the prevailing notion of the difficulty of understanding the language in which they are written.

Now what would have been Shakspere's fate under such treatment? What would his popularity and influence have been now, as compared with what they are, if there had been no theatre to make him known to his humbler countrymen? If none but the wealthier classes had been able to purchase his published works? If his editors had preserved the old, and to our eyes, uncouth style of spelling? Or if, in a word, he had been kept carefully preserved as a pet of the "circles," instead of being allowed to become the pride and glory of the nation? Yet not only has Chaucer been thus situated, but—to make matters worse—by the preservation of *his* old spelling, the superficial difficulties attending the right understanding of his frequently obsolete pronunciation have been most materially enhanced.

What is now to be done? We cannot turn back suddenly the current of a people's thoughts and tastes, any more than we can suddenly compel a river to return to its source; but we may gradually wind back to the place that may not be directly reached; and in order to induce English readers to venture upon this noble pilgrimage, we may make the *way* as convenient and agreeable as possible. The following pages must be looked upon as an humble attempt to aid in this good work.

Three different modes have been adopted by the lovers of Chaucer in their attempts to popularize his works.

First, they have modernized his poetry; that is to say, re-written it, as poetry. How Wordsworth and his coadjutors failed is notorious. Whenever a man shall arise possessing *exactly* the same powers, views, tastes, and individual characteristics as the great father of our literature, and will undertake to give us a new version of the 'Canterbury Tales,' we have no doubt the task may be satisfactorily accomplished, and not till then. How Dryden failed we trust we have in some degree shown in our Remarks on the Knight's Tale, and in other places; and if such a poet could fail with a subject so peculiarly suited to him, who can ever hope, under ordinary circumstances, to succeed?

Secondly, the *poetical* has been transformed into a *prose* narration; and thus the story, at least, has been freed from the difficulties and hindrances caused by antiquated words or pronunciations; but then it has necessarily been relieved at the same time from all the subtler elements of the poetry. A still more important objection to prose versions of Chaucer is the fact that they do not, in the slightest degree, prepare the reader to throw aside, at some time or other, all such extraneous aid by gradually accustoming him to the perusal of the original text.

Thirdly, Chaucer's poetry has been presented in its own

complete form, with a modernized spelling, and an accented pronunciation. Eventually, perhaps, this will be the method permanently adopted for all popular editions of the poet ; but, at present, such books attract neither the student nor the general reader : too lax for the one, they still remain—apparently —too irksome for the other.

In the following pages we have endeavoured to combine the peculiar advantages offered by the two methods last named, and to get rid of their drawbacks. We have proposed to ourselves to make the whole course of the *story* clear by resolving inconvenient or difficult passages of the poetry into prose ; but, at the same time, to allow the reader to be constantly refreshing himself from the "well of English *undefiled*," by leaving all the remainder, including the finest portions of the poetry, in its own nervous and beautiful language.

In the preparation of this prose we have constantly asked ourselves these two questions, and these only :—Does it sufficiently reflect the thoughts, style, and words of the original? Does it harmonize with, and glide easily into it? It will be a source of deep satisfaction to us if others are better satisfied upon these points than we ourselves can pretend to be ; and if, upon the whole, the publication may in any degree lessen the period that must elapse before Chaucer shall be, through all his works, his own sole interpreter.

We have spoken of "difficulties." These, we think, may be entirely got rid of, without any innovation on the poet's own words, or probable modes of pronunciation. A glossary at the foot of each page ; modern spelling where practicable ; and a careful accentuation of the words, which, in accordance with the principles that guided Chaucer in its composition, require to be differently pronounced than at present, will enable any reader of ordinary intelligence to enjoy this fine old poet in something like his own admirable dress. It is true, that Chaucer had not much relish for the *regimental* school of rhythm ; and did not, like some later poets, and like some of his own commentators, think that the feet of verse should move with the same kind of uniform march as the feet of a troop of infantry ; and he is, therefore, in a considerable degree, at the mercy of all, ourselves of course included, who undertake to modernize his orthography, or accentuate his pronunciation. But we venture to think, that good principles, if they do not enable us to command absolute success, will at least prevent us from going far astray.

Our principles are, first, that Chaucer's verse is worthy of his poetry, when we can be sure we have his verse (a subject touched on in another page) ; and, secondly, that without blinding or

stunning ourselves in the dust or roar of controversy, as to how he came to write what he did, or whether he ought to have so written, we have only to study in the right spirit what he *has* written, to find all the information we require as to the modes in which he should be read, or in which he should be sent forth, by the aid of the press, for the solace and instruction of mankind.

In the ensuing pages, it will be found that the poet's words are mainly given from Morris's edition, every line of which, however, has been compared with those from other sources, but, as far as possible, in modern orthography; and, *where the old spelling is preserved, it will be generally found to serve the important purpose of suggesting at once the required pronunciation.*

The methods of accentuation we have adopted are these:— 1. Words in which the accent falls upon a different syllable than the one at present emphasized, are marked with an acute accent, as honóur for hoǹour. 2. Where additional syllables (exclusive of diphthongs) are to be sounded, without any change in the spelling, or in the emphasis, they are pointed out by the grave accent, as writè, morè. 3. In Chaucer's time the individual sounds of both vowels, in diphthongs, appear to have been commonly preserved in speech (a custom still lingering in the north of England); and in writing such words, therefore, as creature, truely, and absolution, they are marked creäture, truëly, and absolution, and must be pronounced accordingly, just as in Leeds, to this day, bread is continually heard of as breäd, and dream as dreäm.

We conclude these introductory remarks with a few words on the great error that has so long existed with regard to Chaucer's versification. Dryden, for instance, says, "It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses, which are lame for want of half a foot and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise." The first part of this statement was evidently founded on entire ignorance, or want of consideration, of the state of the language when Chaucer wrote. For centuries the French tongue only was used in the court and among the higher classes of society; Chaucer, with a

[1] Dr. Furnivall has printed the seven best MSS. of the 'Canterbury Tales' in his Six Text edition, and his print of the Harleian MS. 7336, which was the basis of Thomas Wright's and Dr. Morris's editions. Mr. Gilman (U.S.A.) has edited all the Tales from Dr. Furnivall's print of the Ellesmere MS., and from that too, Professor Skeat and Dr. Morris have edited the excellent selections in the Clarendon Press Series, with full Introductions, Notes, and Glossaries.

noble ambition, determined to write an English poem in English words, but of course would find it impossible to eradicate all traces of the French, supposing him to have wished to do so. His poems, therefore, abound with Gallicisms, and a great number of his words require to be pronounced in accordance with the laws of the French rather than the English tongue. It must also be acknowledged, that he did what doubtless every other great poet under his circumstances would have done too, chose whichever pronunciation—the French or the English, both as yet in a very unsettled state—suited him best at the moment. Had Dryden attended to this, he would have found his illustrious predecessor's versification generally flowing and musical, often singularly so. With regard to the last part of his statement, Dryden must be held blameless, except for want of faith:—he saw many exquisite lines, and should therefore have had more confidence in their author than to suppose him capable of writing lines which "no pronunciation could make otherwise" than defective:—for the truth is, that the early editions of Chaucer were grievously corrupt. An interesting evidence of the cause as well as great extent of that corruption, is afforded by the poet's complaint of the state of the manuscripts copied under his own eye and direction, in the lines headed—

CHAUCER'S *words unto his own Scrivener.*

"Adam Scriveyn, if ever it thee befal
Boece or Troilus to writen new,
Under thy lockès mayst thou have the scall
But after my makíng thou writè true.
So oft a day I must thy work renew,
It to correct, and eke to rub and scrape,
And all is through thy negligence and rape."

Now as few beside the poet would feel inclined to take this trouble, and as there were none but him who could perform the task satisfactorily, it is evident that the manuscripts of Chaucer's writings generally must be full of errors. By the collation, however, of many of these, Dr. Morris produced his edition of the 'Canterbury Tales'; and a comparison of the passage transcribed by Dryden in illustration of Chaucer's musical defects, as he gives it, with the same passage as printed by Morris may form a useful lesson to future commentators. They will see in this, as in a thousand similar cases, that in judging of the works of great poets, wherever there is a doubtful point, faith is the safest as well as justest course. The passage in question is Chaucer's sly defence of the grosser portions of his tales:—

"But first, I pray you of your courtesy,
That ye ne arrette it nought my villainy,
Though that I plainly speak in this mattére,
To tellen you their words, and eke their cheer,
Ne though I speak their words properly ;
For this ye knowen as well as I,
Who shall tellen a tale after a man,
He mote rehearse as nigh as ever he can
Everich word of it be in his charge ;
All speak he, never so rudely, ne large.
Or else he mote tellen his tale untrue,
Or feigne things, or find words new," &c.

No doubt a most crabbed passage, unmusical enough, in all conscience ; but let us look at the passage as Chaucer wrote it, according to Morris's version (though errors may still lurk in and injure it).

"But first I pray you of your courtesy,
That ye ne rette it not my villainy,
Though that I plainly speak in this mattére,
To tellen you their wordès, and their cheer,
Ne though I speak their word*es* properly ;
For this ye knowen *all so* well as I,
Who *so* shall tell a tale aftêr a man,
He must rehearse, as nigh as ever he can,
Every word, if it be in his charge ;
All speak he never so rudèly ne large.
Or elles he must tellen his tale untrue,
Or feignen things, or find*en* word*es* new."

To this specimen of Chaucer suppose we now add another. Did glorious John, we wonder, ever pause to reflect upon the style of this passage, among countless others of equal excellence ?

"I say for me, it is a great disease,
Where as men háve been in great wealth and ease,
To hearen of their sudden fall, alas !
And the contráire is joy and great solás ;
As when a man hath been in poor estate,
And climbeth up, and waxeth fortunate,
And there abideth in prosperity,
Such thing is gladsome, as it thinketh me."

If this be not majestic music married to immortal poesy, we do not know what is.

The reader can now partially appreciate the force of Dryden's statement as to Chaucer's language, which, he says, "is so obsolete, that his sense is scarce to be understood ;" or his kind apology for Chaucer, "he lived in the infancy of our poetry ;" or his liberal and generous assurance, "yet many of his verses consist of ten syllables, and the words not much behind our present English."

Section I.

THE TABARD—ITS HISTORY.

PEGHT, in the Glossary to his edition of Chaucer (1602), writes of the "Inn in Southwark by London, within the which was the lodging of the Abbot of Hyde by Winchester. This was the hostelry where Chaucer and the other pilgrims met together, and, with Henry Bailly their host, accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury. And whereas through time it hath been much decayed, it is now by Master J. Preston, with the Abbot's house thereto adjoined, newly repaired, and with convenient rooms much increased for the receipt of many guests."

The Abbey of Hyde, to which then it appears the Tabard belonged, had no less distinguished a founder than Alfred the Great, and became, in progress of time, a very splendid and wealthy establishment. Its inmates appear to have caught something of Alfred's chivalrous spirit, for, at the battle of Hastings, the Abbot, who was related to Harold, came into the field with twelve of his monks and a score of soldiers; and of all those brave English hearts who there struggled for the freedom of their outraged soil, none appear to have done better service than these gallant monks. They fell, every man, in the field; indeed their heroism appears to have been so conspicuous as to attract the Conqueror's attention, for he afterwards used their house with especial harshness, not only seizing their land, but keeping the abbey without a head for nearly three years. Henry II., however, made amends for all its past losses: he endowed it so magnificently that it became one of the most distinguished of English monasteries; and when parliaments began to meet, and the abbots to be summoned to the upper house, the Abbot of Hyde was among the number. A London residence now became necessary, and there is every probability that the site of the Tabard was purchased for this purpose—the High Street being a favoured place with those reverend prelates. The year after the conveyance, (August, 1307,) the Abbot obtained a licence for "A chapel at his hospitium at St. Margaret's." Finally, at the dissolution of religious houses, the Abbot's house here was granted to John and Thomas

Masters. In Rendle's 'Old Southwark, and its People,' the property is summed up "in the surrender at the Dissolution, as one hostelry called the Taberd, the Abbot's place, the Abbot's stable, the garden belonging," and "a dung place leading to the ditch going to the Thames."

"The two names which perhaps do the greatest honour to the annals of English literature are those of Chaucer and Shakspere. After the dramas of Shakspere, there is no production of man that displays more various and vigorous talent than the 'Canterbury Tales.' Splendour of narrative, richness of fancy, pathetic simplicity of incident and feeling, a powerful style in delineating character and manners, and an animated vein of comic humour, each takes its turn in this wonderful performance, and each in turn appears to be that in which the author was most qualified to succeed." Thus writes Godwin, in the preface to his Life of the poet, reviewing generally the characteristics of the great father of English poetry; but elsewhere, noticing that particular quality which more than any other stamps Chaucer's productions, he calls him emphatically "*the poet of character and manners:*" it is in that light we here propose to view him.

The 'Canterbury Tales' are preceded by a prologue, in which the plot and characters are shown, and which thus begins; the poet in his own person being the narrator:—

"When that Aprille with his showres swoote,[1]
The drought of March hath piercèd to the root,
And bathèd every vein in such licóur
Of which virtúe engendered is the floure;
When Zephirus—eke with his sweetè breath
Inspirèd hath in every holt and heath
The tender croppès, and the youngè sun
Hath in the Ram his halfè course yrun,
And smalle fowlès[2] maken melody,
That sleepen all the night with open eye,
So pricketh them Natúre in their couráges;[3]
Then longeth folk to go on pilgrimáges,
And palmers for to seeken strangè strands
To ferne halwes, couth[4] in sundry lands,
And, 'specially, from every shirès end
Of Enge-land to Canterbury they wend,
The holy blissful martyr for to seek
That them hath holpen, when that they were sick.[5]

[1] Sweet. [2] Birds. [3] Hearts—spirits—inclinations.
[4] To distant saints or shrines.
[5] Occasional consonances of this character—borrowed from French poetry—were esteemed a beauty in old English verse.

CHAUCER.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

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Befel, that in that season on a day,
In Southwark, at the Tabard as I lay,
Ready to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canterbury with full devout courage,
At night was come into that hostelry
Well nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry folk, by adventure yfall
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all,
That toward Canterbury woulden ride."

The essential difference between the two classes of persons here mentioned, the palmers and the pilgrims, was, that the latter had "one dwelling place, a palmer had none; the pilgrim travelled to some certain place, the palmer to all, and not to any one in particular; the pilgrim must go at his own charge, the palmer must profess wilful poverty; the pilgrim might give over his profession, the palmer must be constant."—*Blount's Glossography.*

"The pilgrim," says M. J. J. Jusserand,[1] "was enough respected to find his living, and he took care by the recital of his miseries to make himself the more revered; the numerous leaden medals sewn to his clothes spoke highly in his favour, and a man was well received, who had passed through Rome and through Jerusalem, and could give news of the 'worshippers' of Mahomet. He had a bag hung at his side for provisions, and a staff in his hand; at the top of the staff was a knob, and sometimes a piece of metal with an appropriate inscription, as, for example, the device of a bronze ring found at Hitchin, a cross with these words, '*Haec in tute dirigat iter*' (May this direct thee safely in the way). The staff at the other end had an iron point, like an alpenstock of the present day."

The name of the palmer, it is hardly necessary to mention, was derived from the custom of carrying a staff formed out of a branch of the palm tree. A very interesting view of the English pilgrims during the period of Chaucer is afforded to us in the trial of one of the earliest English martyrs, William Thorpe, who, in the year 1407, was brought before Archbishop Arundel on a charge of heresy. Among the subjects introduced into his examination was that of pilgrimages. Thorpe is accused of having said, "those men and women that go on pilgrimages to Canterbury, to Beverley, to Karlington, to Walsingham, and to any other such places, are accursed and made foolish, spending their money in waste." Thorpe, in answer, supports the truth of these opinions, and says that people go on

[1] 'Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages' (14th century), translated from the French by Lucy Toulmin Smith, 1889.

pilgrimages more for the health of their bodies than of their souls, "more to have riches and prosperity of this world than to be enriched with virtues in their souls, more to have here worldly and fleshly friendship than for to have friendship of God and of his saints in heaven." This curious passage shows us, that if Thorpe were right in his idea of the unspiritual tendencies of the custom, the custom still had its uses, and important ones, though no doubt pilgrims generally felt scandalized by such naked expositions of the true character of pilgrimages. Thorpe, however, can give us a picture of the actual thing, as well as of its objects.

"Also, sir," he says, "I know well, that when divers men and women will go thus after their own wills," they will arrange with one another "to have with them both men and women that can well sing wanton songs; and some other pilgrims will have with them bagpipes; so that every town they come through, what with the noise of their singing, and with the sound of their piping, and with the jingling of their Canterbury bells, and with barking out of dogs after them, that they make more noise than if the king came there away with all his clarions and many other minstrels. And if these men and women be a month in their pilgrimage, many of them shall be an half year after great janglers, tale-tellers, and liars." The Archbishop's answer, partly in justification, gives an odd instance of the advantages of pilgrims having with them such singers and pipers; "when," he says, "one of them that goeth barefoot striketh his toe upon a stone, ... and maketh him to bleed, it is well done that he or his fellow begin then a song, or else take out of his bosom a bagpipe for to drive away with such mirth the hurt of his fellow. For with such solace the travel and weariness of pilgrims is lightly and merrily brought forth."—*State Trials.*

"Wyclif," says Jusserand, "denounced pilgrimages most persistently, so much so that when one of his followers had to renounce his heresies, belief in the usefulness and sanctity of pilgrimages was one of the articles he had to subscribe. Thus in his vow of adjuration, the Lollard William Dynet, of Nottingham, on Dec. 1, 1395, swears in these words, 'Fro this day forewarde I shall worshipe images, with praying and offering vnto them, in the worschepe of the seintes that they be made after; and also I shall neuermore despyse pylgremage.'"

Persons of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, were accustomed to fulfil this great duty, as it was esteemed, and which certainly was a great pleasure, of going on pilgrimages, and more especially to the shrine of the chief saint of sinners, Thomas à Becket. Thus on one occasion Chaucer's own patron

and king, Edward III., goes with his mother to Canterbury, in Lent; whilst, in reference to the other extremity of the social scale, the statute of 1388 tells us plainly that no one was too poor or humble for the privilege. That statute enacted that no servant or labourer, whether man or woman, should depart at the end of his term of service out of the hundred, rape, or wapentake where he was resident, under colour of going on pilgrimage, unless he had letters patent containing the cause of his going, and the time of his return. There was little difficulty in those days as to the means of support for such poor pilgrims. Their wealthier companions would no doubt aid them when necessary; there was a hospitable welcome for them at every monastery or hospital; above all, there were the little wayside chapels, erected for the accommodation of travellers, and more especially for pilgrims, where not only shelter was provided, but a pittance of food in addition for those who needed it. "In our pedestrianism," says a writer in the Athenæum, "we have traced the now desolate remains of several of these chapels along the old pilgrims' road to Canterbury."

The chief, apparently, of all the houses of public entertainment in the metropolis, where pilgrims were wont to assemble before their departure, was the 'Tabard' of Chaucer. There are few more ancient streets than that in which the famous hostelry is situated—the High Street of Southwark. During the period of the Roman Londinium, two thousand years ago. it was undoubtedly what it still remains—the great road from the metropolis to the southern ports. Roman antiquities are still occasionally found in different parts of the line. Its convenient situation as a suburb for the entertainment of travellers passing between London and the counties of Surrey, Sussex, and Kent, —who were here as contiguous to the "silent highway" of the Thames as they could desire, and at the same time more pleasantly lodged than they could be in the densely-populated metropolis,— made it early famous for its inns. After the murder and canonization of Becket, the number of persons continually setting out on pilgrimages to his shrine at Canterbury, contributed still further to the increase and prosperity of these houses of entertainment. Stow, several centuries later (in 1598), alludes to them in such a way as to show that they then formed a principal feature of the High Street: "In Southwark be many fair inns for receipt of travellers;" and he then proceeds, "amongst the which the most ancient is the Tabard, so called of the sign, which as we now term it, is of a jacket or sleeveless coat, whole before, open on both sides, with a square collar, winged at the shoulders: a stately garment of old time, commonly worn of noblemen and others,

both at home and abroad in the wars ; but then (to wit in the wars) their arms embroidered, or otherwise depict upon them, that every man by his coat of arms might be known from others. But now these tabards are only worn by the heralds, and be called their coats of arms in service." This "most ancient" then of the inns of Southwark, even in 1598—this great rival of our Boar's Heads and Mermaids, which, older than either, survived both—was situated immediately opposite what was formerly called St. Margaret's Hill (though now perfectly level), then the site of St. Margaret's Church, now of the Town-hall of the Borough. The exterior of the inn was simply a narrow, square, dilapidated-looking gateway ; its posts strapped with rusty iron bands—its gates half covered with sheets of the same metal. "The Talbot Inn" was painted above, and there was also the inscription :—"This is the Inne where Sir Jeffry Chaucer and the nine and twenty Pilgrims lay in their journey to Canterbury, anno 1383."

Before starting on their pilgrimage, the pious among the wayfarers would no doubt perform their devotions in Thomas-à-Becket's Chapel, built on one of the eastern piers near the middle of old London Bridge. "A mason being master worke man of the bridge, builded from the foundation the chappell on London Bridge, of his owne proper expenses." Stowe, Annales, 1605, p. 251. This stone bridge was completed A.D. 1209.

A VISIT TO THE TABARD.

IT is something to congratulate oneself upon, the having seen the actual Tabard, or what remained of the ancient inn, which Chaucer has immortalized, in spite of the Vandalism of its destruction since. The editor therefore need not apologize for reproducing the record of a personal visit, describing the place *as seen*, therefore in the present tense, by way of introduction to an imaginative review of the Pilgrims on the great day of their departure.

The state of the gateway presents but a too faithful type of the general state of the inn. Its patchings and alterations, its blackened doors and bursting ceiling, and its immense cross-beams, tell us, in language not to be mistaken, of antiquity and departed greatness. From the gateway the yard is open to the sky, and gradually widens. On either side is a range of brick buildings, extending for some little distance; opposite the end of that on the right, the left-hand range is continued by the most interesting part of the Tabard, a stone-coloured wooden gallery on the first floor, which, in its course making a right angle, presents its principal portion directly opposite the entrance from the High Street. It is supported by plain thick round pillars, also of wood; and it supports on other pillars of a slenderer make, in front, the bottom of the very high and sloping tiled roof. Offices, with dwellings above, occupy the left range as far as the gallery, beneath which are stables; whilst under the front portion of the gallery is a waggon-office, with its miscellaneous packages lying about; and suggesting thoughts of the time when as yet road-waggons, properly so called, were unknown, and the carriers, with their strings of pack-horses and jingling bells, filled the yard with their bustle and obstreperous notes of preparation for departure. Immediately over this office, in the centre of the gallery, is a picture, said to be by Blake, and "well painted," of the Canterbury Pilgrimage, though now so dirty or decayed that the subject itself is hardly discernible. The buildings on the right are principally occupied by the bar, tap-room, parlour, &c., of the present inn: to these, therefore, we shall for convenience give that appellation, although the gallery and stables also still belong to it. From the inn, then, originally stretched across to the gallery a bridge of communication, balustraded, we may be sure, like the gallery, and arched over like the similar bridge

still existing in another part of the yard. The proofs of this connecting bridge are exhibited on the wall of the inn, in the blackened ends of the row of horizontal planks, set edge-wise, which once supported it, and in the door, now walled up, to which it led, that opened into a large room, extending quite through the depth of the inn-buildings. On turning the corner of the right-hand range, we find in the same line, but standing considerably back, the lofty stables; and scarcely can we enter the doors, before—as our eye measures their extraordinary size—we acknowledge the truth of Chaucer's description: we are almost satisfied this must have been the place he saw. They are, indeed, "wide." On the same side is another range of buildings, continued into another open yard behind; on the opposite side projects the end of the gallery; and here we find the other bridge we have mentioned connecting the two sides, and which is in a most ruinous-looking state. The great extent of the original inn may be conceived when we state that there is little doubt but that it occupied the whole yard, with all its numerous buildings; for, from one of the houses in the High Street, standing on the north side of the gateway, a communication is still traceable through all the intermediate tenements to the gallery; from thence, at its furthest extremity, across the bridge to the stables, and back again to the present inn; and, lastly, from thence right through to the High Street once more—to the house on the South side of the gateway.

Let us now walk into the interior. The master of the inn, of whom we may say, with a slight alteration of Chaucer's words—

"A seemly man our hostè is withal,"—

welcomes us at the door, and kindly and patiently inducts us into all its hidden mysteries. Passing with a hasty glance the bar in front—the parlour behind with its blackened roof and its polished tables—the tap-room on the left—the low doorways, winding passages, broken ceilings, and projecting chimney-arches which everywhere meet the eye—we follow our conductor through a narrow door, and are startled to find ourselves upon what appears, from its very contrast to all around, a magnificently broad staircase, with a handsome fir balustrade in perfect condition, and with landings large enough to be converted into bedrooms. On the first floor is a door on each side: that on the left communicating with one room after another, till you reach the one overlooking the bustle of the High Street; and that on the right leading to the large room, formerly opening out upon the bridge. In this room, which is of considerable size, there are the marks of a cornice yet visible on the ceiling. On the second story, the contrast is almost

ludicrous between the noble staircase and the narrow bedrooms, pushed out from within by an immense bulk of masonry, which (enclosing a stack of chimneys) occupies the central space; and forced in from without by the boldly sloping roof: in fact, they were evidently not intended for each other. The changes induced by decay, accidents, and, above all, by a gradually contracting business, which has caused the larger rooms and wide passages to be divided and subdivided, as convenience prompted or necessity required, may account for these discrepancies. The buildings of the opposite range have evidently been to a certain extent of a corresponding nature. These manifold changes have produced a 'Tabard' very different from that of the memorable April night, when—

"The *chambers* and the stables weren wide;"

and the whole body of pilgrims, numerous as they were, found entertainment of the "best."

Stepping across the central part of the yard to the gallery, we ascend by a staircase, also "shorn of its fair proportions." As we mount the stairs, our eyes are attracted by a retired modest-looking latticed window, peeping out upon the landing; and in different parts of the gallery are passages leading to countless nests of rooms, forming (as perhaps many of them did of old) the dormitories of the inn. In the centre of the gallery, immediately behind the picture, is a door opening into a lofty passage, with a room on each side: that on the right is, as our host announced to us, "*The Pilgrims' room*" of tradition. With due reverence we looked upon its honoured walls, its square chimney-piece, and the panel above reaching to the ceiling, upon which there was till recently some ancient needle-work or tapestry, cut out from a larger work, representing, it is said, a procession to Canterbury, and which probably in the days of its splendour adorned the walls of this very room.

Let it not be said that we have devoted too much space to this ancient and most distinguished of inns; unless the reverence for our great men be condemned at the same time.

From the contention of the seven cities for the honour of the birth-place of "the blind old man of Scio's rocky isle," down to the present day, men in all ages and countries have carefully treasured up every known or supposed fact connected with the personal history of those among them who have raised humanity itself to a higher level by their exertions; and when they cease to do so, it will be not hazarding too much to say that our great poets, patriots, and philosophers may as well at once disappear from the world, for they are nothing if not honoured:

they must be reverenced in order to be understood. If, then, our admiration of a great work interests us so much in its author, and in all the localities where he has been, and where consequently we love to linger, how much more strongly should such feelings be excited where the work itself has its own particular *birthplace* and locality—a home as it were from which it cannot be severed! Thus it is with the 'Canterbury Tales' and with the Tabard—the inn where the *dramatis personæ* of that "Comedy not intended for the stage" meet, in the hall of which its plan is developed, and from which the pilgrims depart, carrying with them an influence that mingles with and presides over all their mirth, humour, pathos, and sublimity, in the person of the Tabard's host, immortal "Harry Bailly."

Let us enter once more the pilgrims' room, and assist us to restore it to something of its original appearance. The intervening walls disappear: from end to end of the long hall there is no obstruction to the eye, except those two round pillars or posts placed near each end to support the massy oaken beams and complicated timbers of the ceiling. The chimney-pieces and panels too are gone, and in their stead is that immense funnel-shaped projection from the wall in the centre, opposite the middle window, with its crackling fire of brushwood and logs on the hearth beneath. The fire itself appears pale and wan, in the midst of the broad stream of golden sunshine pouring in through the windows from the great luminary now fast sinking below the line of St. Margaret's Church in the High Street opposite. Branching out in antlered magnificence from the wall at one extremity of the room, and immediately over the door, are the frontal honours of a first-rate deer, a present probably from the monks of Hyde to their London tenant and entertainer. At the other end of the hall is the cupboard with its glittering array of plate, comprising large silver quart-pots, covered bowls and basins, ewers, salt-cellars, spoons; and in a central compartment of the middle shelf is a lofty gold cup with a curious lid. Lastly, over the chimney-bulk hangs an immense bow, with its attendant paraphernalia of arrows, &c., the symbol of our host's favourite diversion. Attendants now begin to move to and fro, some preparing the tables, evidently for the entertainment of a numerous party, others strewing the floor "with herbes sweet," whilst one considerately closes the window to keep out the chilling evening air, and stirring the fire, throws on more logs. Hark! some of the pilgrims are coming; the miller giving an extra flourish of his bagpipe as he stops opposite the gateway, that they may be received with due attention. Yes, there they are now slowly coming down the yard—that extraordinary assemblage of

individuals from almost every rank of society, as diversified in character as in circumstance, most richly picturesque in costume: an assemblage which only the genius of a Chaucer could have brought so intimately together, and for such admirable purposes. Yes, there is the Knight in his "good" but not "gay" horse, the fair but confident Wife of Bath, the Squire challenging attention by his graceful management of the fiery curvetting steed, the Monk with the golden bells hanging from his horse's trappings, keeping up an incessant jingle.

But who is this in a remote corner of the gallery, leaning upon the balustrade, the most unobserved but most observing of all the numerous individuals scattered about the scene before us? His form is of a goodly bulk, and habited in a very dark violet-coloured dress, with bonnet of the same colour: from a button on his breast hangs the gilt anelace, a kind of knife or dagger. His face is of that kind which, once seen, is remembered for ever. Thought, "sad but sweet," is most impressively stamped upon his pale but comely features, to which the beard lends a fine antique cast. But it is the eye which most arrests you; there is something in that which, whilst you look upon it, seems to open as it were glimpses of an unfathomable world beyond. It is the great poet-pilgrim himself; the narrator of the proceedings of the Canterbury pilgrimage.

The host, having now cordially welcomed the pilgrims, is coming along the gallery to see if the hall be ready for their entertainment, making the solitary man smile as he passes at one of his merry "japes." As he enters the hall, who could fail to recognise the truth of the description?—

> "A seemly man our hoste was withal
> For to have been a marshal in a hall.
> A largè man was he, with eyen steep,
> A fairer burgess is there none in Cheap:
> Bold of his speech, and wise, and well ytaught;
> And of manhood him lackèd righte nought.
> Eke thereto he was right a merry man."

The dismounted pilgrims, singly or in knots, begin to ascend the gallery. Foremost comes the Knight, with a sedate and dignified countenance, telling, like his soiled gipon, of long years of service; his legs are in armour, with gilt spurs; a red-sheathed dagger hangs from his waist, and little aiglets, tipped with gold, from his shoulders. A nobler specimen of chivalry in all its gentleness and power it would be impossible to find than this "worthy man;" as distinguished for his "truth and honour" as for his "freedom and courtesy;" who has been concerned in military expeditions in almost every part of the

world,—has fought in no less than "fifteen mortal battles," and made himself particularly conspicuous against the "heathen;" yet who still remains in his port and bearing as "meek as is a maid;" who is, in short,

"A very perfect gentle knight."

With the Knight comes the Prioress, smiling, so "simple and coy," at his gallant attentions, and looking down every now and then to the tender motto of the gold brooch attached to her beads—*Amor vincit omnia.* She wears a wimple, or neck-covering, "full seemely ypinched," a handsome black cloak, and white tunic beneath—the dress of the Benedictine order, to which she belongs. Her nose is "tretis," that is to say, long and well proportioned; her eyes are grey; her mouth full small, soft, and red; and her fair forehead "a span broad." How graceful is her evident distaste for her rank, because of the stateliness of manner it entails; how plaintive and musical the tones of her voice, as she gives some new evidence of that tenderness of heart which would make her

"Weep, if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled!"

With an attention no less marked than the Knight's, and scarcely less graceful, the host receives his distinguished lady-guest at the door, and, addressing her as "courteously as it had been a maid," leads the way to the table. In the Prioress' train follow a nun and three priests; and next to them the Wife of Bath and the Squire, she laughing loudly and heartily, and he blushing at some remark the merry dame has made concerning his absent lady-love. Strange contrast! the one steeped to the very lips in romance, seeing everything by the "purple light of love," sensitive as the famous plant itself to every touch that threatens to approach the sanctuary of his heart—the corner where the holy ministrations of love are for ever going on: the other no longer young, but still beautiful, consummately sensual and worldly, as utterly divested of the poetry of beauty as a handsome woman can well be. We make that qualification, for it is difficult to look unmoved on her winning countenance, so "fair and red of hue," and which is so well set off by her black hat—

"As broad as is a buckler or a targe."

The Wife's luxuriant-looking form is attired in a closely-fitting red surcoat or jacket, and in a blue petticoat or "fote mantel,"

THE SECOND NUN.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

[The relater of the Tale of St. Cecilia.]

THE NUN'S PRIEST.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"This sweetè priest, this goodly man Sir John."

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bound round "her hippes large," by a golden girdle. Well, although—

"Husbandès at the church-door had she five,"

we may be pretty sure that it will not be long before a sixth is added to the number. Of all the pilgrims, her companion, the Squire, is perhaps the most poetical, and appears in the most poetical costume, with his curled locks adorning his youthful, ingenuous, and manly face; his embroidered dress looking—

"As it were a mead,
All full of freshè flow'res, white and red;"

and his graceful and active form revealing in every movement, that he possesses all the vigour with the *freshness* of the "month of May;" that he is a "lusty bachelor" as well as a "lover," who can one while honourably partake all the dangers of his father's foreign expeditions, and the next be content to be doing nothing but "singing" or "floyting[1] all the day." The Knight and the Squire have with them but a single attendant, a yeoman, "clad in coat and hood of green," wearing a sword and buckler on one side, and a "gay" dagger on the other, and having a mighty bow in his hand. His "peacock arrows bright and keen" are under his belt, and his horn is slung by the green baudrick across his shoulder.

"A forester *is* he soothly as I guess."

It has been remarked that we often hate those whose opinions differ but to a moderate extent from our own, much more than we do those with whom we have not one opinion in common; thinking, perhaps, that we are in more danger of being mixed up in the eyes of the world with the first than with the last. Some such feeling appears to actuate two, at least, of the three reverend men who are now entering the hall, namely, the respectable Monk and the half-vagabond Friar, who, whilst looking somewhat suspiciously on each other, seem to agree in their aversion to the Parson before them. He, however, with his meek, placid countenance, and crossed hands, walks quietly up to the table, quite unconscious of the sentiments he has excited: his habit, a scarlet surcoat and hood, with a girdle of beads round his waist, proclaims the ministering priest. And where, in the history or literature of any age or nation, may we look for so perfectly sublime a character in such a simple, homely shape as this now before

[1] Playing on the flute.

us? A man poor in circumstances, but rich in "holy thought and work," who, even in his poverty, will rather give to all his poor parishioners about, than "cursen," like his brethren, "for his tithes,"—who delays not,

> "for rainè, nor thundér,
> In sickness and in mischief[2] to visít
> The farthest in his parish;"

and who, though fully qualified by his learning and abilities to fill the highest offices of the Church, yet remains "full patient" in his adversity, teaching "Christe's lore" to all, but letting all at the same time see that he first follows it himself. No wonder a man of this character finds little sympathy with a rich Monk, who can see no reason why he should be always poring over a book in a cloister, when he might be "pricking and of hunting for the hare," and whose appearance bespeaks the luxurious tastes and appetites of its owner—"a lord full fat and in good point." He wears a black gown, the large sleeves worked or purfled at the edges with the finest fur; his hood, now thrown back and revealing his bald head, shining "as any glass," is fastened under his chin by a curious pin of gold, with a love-knot in the greater end.

> "Now certainly he *is* a fair preláte."

The Friar, "a wanton and merry," with his tippet stuffed full of knives and pins (presents for the fair wives with whom he is so great a favourite), and lisping—

> "For wantonness,
> To make his English sweet upon his tongue"—

looks still less inclined to mortify his appetites, or to want any of the good things of life for any other reason than the difficulty of obtaining them;—a small difficulty with him, whilst there are riotous "franklins," or "worthy women," to be absolved of their sins—whilst he maintains his reputation as the best beggar in his house;—or, lastly, whilst his "harping" and his "songs" make him a welcome guest at the "taverns" where our Friar appears in all his glory, with his eyes twinkling—

> "As do the starrès in the frosty night."

But the supper-bell rings, and the remainder of the pilgrims rapidly obey the signal; a glimpse of each in passing is all

[2] Misfortune.

that the time will admit of. Foremost comes the Sumpnour, one of that "rabble" which Milton denounces—a summoner of offenders to the ecclesiastical courts, with his "fire-red cherubinnes face," and the "knobbes sitting on his cheeks,"

("Of his viságe—children were sore afeard,")

the very incarnation of gross, depraved self-indulgence. The immense garland on his head, however, shows he has no mean opinion of his personal attractions. Every remark he makes is plentifully interlarded with the Latin law-terms he has picked up in his attendance on the courts; but beware how you ask him their meaning: already he "hath spent all his philosophy." With him comes his "friend and compeer," the Pardoner, his lanky yellow hair falling about his shoulders, and bearing before him his precious wallet—

"Bret full of pardon come from Rome all hot,"

and containing also his invaluable relics—the veil of "Our Lady," and a piece of the sail of St. Peter's boat. The Miller, who is immediately behind him, seems to listen with marked disrelish to his small goat's voice, and to look with something very like disgust upon his beardless face: he evidently would half like to throw him over the gallery. Certainly no man can be more unlike the object of the Miller's contempt and aversion than the Miller himself, so big of brawn and bone, with his stiff spade-like beard and manly countenance, from the beauty of which, it must at the same time be confessed, the nose, with its large wart and tuft of red bristling hairs, somewhat detracts. His favourite bagpipes are under his arm; he is habited in a "white coat" and "blue hood." The "slender choleric" Reeve, or Steward, comes next, having his hair shaved off around his ears, and a long rusty sword by his side, seeming to intimate that he finds that too, as well as his sharp wits (on which "no auditor" can win), sometimes in requisition to enable him so well to keep his "garner." The weather, the seed, the crops form the subjects of his conversation with the Merchant at his side, who is dressed in a "motley" garment of red, lined with blue, and figured with white and blue flowers; he has a Flanders beaver hat upon his head, and boots, with "fair" and handsome clasps, upon his feet. The man of business is inscribed on his face. Pausing for a moment beside the door, that he may enter with becoming dignity, appears the opulent and eminent Sergeant of the Law, wearing the characteristic feature of his order, the coif, and the no less characteristic feature of the individual, the homely coat of mixed colours. He

not only *is* a man full rich of excellence, but takes care to be thought so by his wise speech ; and, whilst the busiest man in his profession, seems ever to be still busier than he is. Such is the man of law—the Judge "full often at assize." Another professional man!—the Doctor of Physic, in his low hood and bright purple surcoat and stockings; none like him to speak of physic and of surgery, and of the general business of the healing art ; for he is grounded in astrology, and keeps

"His patient wondrously well
In houres by his magic natural."

It is not, however, to be overlooked, that he knows "the cause of every malady"—a knowledge that incredulous, unimaginative people may think of more importance to his fame, as a "very perfect practiser," than the being grounded in astrology.

Let us commend to all lovers of good living the pilgrim who is next coming along the gallery, this handsome-looking stately gentleman, with the snow white beard and sanguine complexion, and the white silk gipciere, or purse, hanging from his waist. It is the Franklin, some time knight of the shire, "Epicurus' owen son ;" who is evidently snuffing up with eager pleasure certain delicate scents floating hitherwards from the kitchen, and offering up prayers that no unlucky accident may mar the delights of the table, that the sauce may not want in sharpness and poignancy, or his favourite dish be done a turn too much. He is certainly an epicure, but he is also what epicures sometimes are not, exceedingly hospitable : you shall never enter his house without finding great store of baked meats, fish and flesh, or without experiencing the truth of the popular remark—

"It snowèd in his house of meat and drink."

Lastly, come crowding in together the Manciple, so "wise in buying of victual" for the temple to which he belongs, dressed in a light-blue surcoat, and little light-brown cap ; the Shipman, whose hue "the hot summer" has made "all brown," whose beard has been shaken in "many a tempest," and who seems to be still treading his favourite deck ; the Cook, famous for his "blanc-manger," who has been preparing for the culinary exertions of the morrow by a little extra refreshment this evening ; the Ploughman—the Parson's brother, a man possessing much of the Parson's spirit ; and the Haberdasher, the Carpenter, the Weaver, the Dyer, and the Maker of Tapestry, with their silver-wrought knives, showing each of them is well to do in the world, and in every respect

"*Is* shapely for to be an alderman."

Two only of the pilgrims are now missing from the board, the Clerk of Oxenford and the Poet: and here they come; the poor Clerk, in his "threadbare" garment, and with his "hollow" face lighted up by an air of inexpressible animation at some remark that has dropped from the lips of his inspired companion. And could Chaucer look unmoved at such a character as the Clerk?—a character so much like his own in all respects but rank and worldly circumstance, that we are not sure but he has here pointed out those mental characteristics which he did not choose to include in his own nominal portrait; which, be it observed too, is merely personal. The Clerk has his own love of books, and study

> "Of Aristotle and his philosophy;"

whilst of Chaucer, perhaps, might be more justly said than of the Clerk,

> "Not a word spake he more than was need,
> And that he spake, it was of high prudénce,
> And short, and quick, and full of great senténce.
> Sounding in moral virtue was his speech,
> And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."

Supper is now brought in; fish, flesh, and fowl, baked meats, roast meats, and boiled, high-seasoned dishes, burning as it were with wild-fire, and others gaily painted and turreted with paper. Among the liquors handed round, due honour is done to the famous ale, of which the proverb says—

> "The nappy strong ale of Southwark
> Keeps many a gossip frae the kirk."

"Strong" wines, also, are there, either "neat as imported," according to the old tavern inscriptions, such as those of Rochelle, Bourdeaux, Anjou, Gascoyne, Oseye, &c., or compounded under the names of Hippocras, pigment, and claret. Both ale and wine are carried by the attendants in goblets of wood and pewter. Pilgrims have generally sharp appetites, and Chaucer's are by no means an exception; they have commenced in good earnest the business of the table.

Scarcely is the supper over, and the "reckonings" made, before our Host, who has evidently for some time been impatient to tell the guests of the merry fancy that possesses him, bursts out with—

> "Lo, lordings truëly
> Ye be to me right welcome heartily;

For by my truth, if that I shall not lie,
I ne saw this year so merry a company
At once in this herberwè[1] as is now,
Fain would I do you mirthe, wist I how.
And of a mirth I am right now bethought,
To do you ease, and it shall costè nought.
Ye go to Canterbury; God you speed,
The blissful martyr 'quitè[2] you your meed!
And well I wot as ye go by the way
Ye shapen you to talken and to play:
For truëly comfórt, ne mirth, is none
To riden by the way dumb as a stone.
And therefore will I maken you disport,
As I said erst, and do you some comfórt.
And if you liketh all by one assent
Now for to standen at my judgèment,
And for to worken as I shall you say
To-morrow, when ye riden by the way,—
Now by my father's soulè that is dead,
But ye be merry, smiteth off my head.
Hold up your hands withouten morè speech."

The answer of the pilgrims may be easily guessed; the frank hearty good-nature—the gay jovial spirit of the appeal was cordially responded to; in a spirit of the truest wisdom, Chaucer says—

"Us thought it was not worth to make it wise,"

so they "bad him say his verdict as him lest[3]:"—

"Lordings, quoth he, now hearkeneth for the best;
But take it not, I pray you, in disdain:
This is the point, to speaken short and plain,
That each of you, to shorten with your way
In this viáge[4] shall tellen talès tway;
To Canterbury ward, I mean it so,
And homeward he shall tellen other two,
Of ádventurès that them have befall.
And which of you that beareth him best of all,
That is to say, that telleth in this case
Talès of best senténce and of soláce,
Shall have a supper at your aller[5] cost,
Here in this placè, sitting by this post,
When that we come again from Canterbury."

We cannot but observe, by the way, how this last line

[1] From arbour apparently, a word often applied anciently to inns, lodgings, &c. [2] Requite.
[3] Lest,—liked, pleased. [4] Viage,—journey. [5] At the cost of all.

but one carries the eye and the thought back to the domestic architecture of the middle ages, when the large rooms or halls of inns, and of gentlemen's mansions of a secondary and inferior class, were supported sometimes by a pillar or "post" in the centre, sometimes by one near each end of the room. Near the post appears to have been the head of the table, the place of honour; for the Host says the victor in the proposed intellectual games shall sit "here in this place, sitting by the post;" and it is a characteristic evidence of the dignity and social rank of "hosts" in those days to find Harry Bailly, our host, even in the presence of a knight of distinguished reputation, who forms one of the party, taking that seat as a matter of course. The proposal is now told, but the Host naturally wishes himself to enjoy the mirth it provides, and therefore adds—

> "And, for to maken you the morè merry,
> I will myselven gladly with you ride
> Right at mine owen cost, and be your guide;
> And whoso will my judgèment withsay,
> Shall pay for all we spenden by the way."

Both propositions are accepted by the pilgrims with "full glad heart," and they "prayden him also"

> "—that he woulde be our governor,
> And of our Talès judge and réporter,
> And set a supper at a certain price;
> And we would rulèd be at his device
> In high and low."

In the morning the pilgrims ride forth, and then the Host, reminding them of their engagement, at once assumes the duties of his situation:—

> "Let see now, who shall telle first a tale,
> As ever may I drinken wine and ale,
> Who so be rebel to my judgèment
> Shall pay for all that by the way is spent.
> Now draweth cut, ere that we farther twinne,[1]
> He which that hath the shortest shall begin."

The "cut" or lot falls on the Knight, not without exciting suspicion against our politic Host of a little manœuvring, to ensure a priority desirable on account of the rank of the party, and to compass also what perhaps the Host thought of more importance—a favourable commencement of his scheme. The

[1] Twinne,—go.

Knight begins with that noble tale, so well known by Dryden's version, of Palamon and Arcite. Such is the plan, and such the mode of commencement, of the 'Canterbury Tales.'

With wonderful strength and consistency, the character of the Host is kept up throughout the work. His undissembled delight at the close of the Knight's tale—

> "Our host then laughed and swore, ...
> This go'th right well, unbuckled is the mail:
> Let see now, who shall tell another tale;"—

his professional considerateness, when, having named the Monk as the next spokesman, the drunken Miller interposes and insists upon first telling his tale, the Host kindly says—

> "Robin, Abidè, my levè[1] brother,
> Some better man shall tell us first another:
> Abidè, and let us worken thriftily;"

but finding him deaf to reason, bids him hastily "Tell on a devil way;"—his dislike to the Reve's "sermoning," as he characterizes the latter's moral reflections on his own past life;—his humour when he reminds the Cook of the many a Jack of Dover (probably a species of pasty) he has sold

> "That hath been twiès hot and twiès cold;"—

his scorn of the Franklin's desire that his son should learn gentillesse—

> "Straw for your gentillessè, quoth our host;"—

his indignation at injustice, and his sympathy with its objects, as marked by his observations on the Doctor's tale (the popular story of Virginius);—his ludicrous contempt for the Pardoner, who made a business of the exhibition of relics;—and, lastly, his peculiarly tender and gallant manners towards the fair, as shown when he addresses the Prioress

> "As courteously as it had been a maid;"

all combine to form a picture of as true and genuine a specimen of a good old English man as it would be possible to find in the entire range of literature. Our space will only allow us to notice one or two other interesting matters connected with the Host. The first concerns a piece of his domestic history which is furnished to us, and from which we find that his lady was somewhat of a shrew. He tells us a few particulars of her

[1] Dear.

at the conclusion of the Merchant's tale, in which a lady plays a not very creditable part.

> "By Goddes mercy, said our hoste tho,[1]
> Now such a wife I pray God keep me fro.
> Lo, whichè sleightès and subtîlities
> In women be; for aye as busy as bees
> Be they us silly men for to deceive,
> And from a sothè[2] will they ever weive.[3]
> * * * *
> I have a wife, though that she poore be;
> But of her tongue a labbing[4] shrew is she,
> And yet she hath a heap of vices mo."

However, thinks he, it is an unpleasant subject—so

> "Let all such thinges go;"

the more too that he prudently remembers the possibility that what he was saying

> "Should reported be,
> And told to her of some of this meiny[5];"

so he desists for the present; but when the subject is again brought home to him, by the contrast presented by the character of Prudence in the tale of Melibœus, he cannot help exclaiming

> "As I am faithful man,
> And by the precious *corpus Madrian*,
> I hadde liever, than a barrel of ale
> That goode lief my wife had heard this tale;
> For she is no thing of such patïence."

And some very striking proofs of the charge he proceeds to give:—

> "By Goddes bonès, when I beat my knaves,
> She brings me forth the greate clubbèd staves,
> And crieth, 'Slay the dogges every one,
> And break of them bothe back and bone.'
> And if that any neighèbour of mine
> Will not to my wife in church incline,
> Or be so hardy to her to trespáce,
> When she comes home she rampeth in my face,
> And cryeth, 'Falsè coward, wreak thy wife!
> By *corpus bonès*, I will have thy knife;
> And thou shalt have my distaff, and go spin.
> From day to night, right thus she will begin.

[1] Then. [2] Truth. [3] Depart. [4] Blabbing. [5] Company.

Alas, she saith, that ever I was yshape
To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,
That will be overlad with[1] every wight!
Thou dar'st not stande by thy wivès right.
This is my life, but if I that will fight;
And out at door anon I must me dight
Or elles I am lost, but if that I
Be like a wilde lion, fool hardý," &c.

Alas! poor Host, thine is a hopeless case. But, as he says,

"Let us pass away from this mattére."

An interesting illustration of the times in connection with religious matters arises from the general propensity to swearing. "Benedicite!" exclaims the Parson to the Host in the Shipman's prologue,

"What aileth the man, so sinfully to swear?
Our host answér'd, O! Jankin, be ye there?
Now good men, quoth our hoste, heark'néth to me,
I smell a Lollard in the wind, quod he,
This Lollard here will preachen us somewhat."

So that to abstain from ribaldry and profane oaths in the time of Wycliffe, were proofs of heresy; as they were afterwards, in the reigns of Charles I. and II., of disloyalty! The lines that follow are highly interesting as showing us the opinions of Lollardism at the very time that Wycliffe was actively propagating the "heresy." The Poet was in all probability something of a Lollard himself. Taking up the Host's prophecy that the Parson will give them a sermon—

"Nay, by my father's soul, that shall he not,
Saide the Shipman; here shall he naught preach,
He shall no gospel glosen here, nor teach;
We 'lieven all in the great God, quoth he.
He woulde sowen some difficulty,
Or springen cockle in our cleane corn," &c.

We conclude our notice of the Host's character by observing that Shakspere has exhibited his admiration of it in a marked manner. From the Host of Chaucer, "Mine Host of the Garter in the Merry Wives of Windsor is obviously derived; and that even our immortal dramatist should in his copy have been far from surpassing the original, is surely the highest of imaginable tributes to the triumphant genius of Chaucer."[2]

[1] Overborne by. [2] 'Retrospective Review,' vol. xiv., p. 315.

We may add, too, that it is probable Shakspere desired the original to be remembered, not only from the use of the same general denomination—Host—but from the very peculiarities of *his* Host's speech, "Said I well?" is his constant phrase; "Said I not well?" exclaims Harry Bailly. [Pardoner's Prologue, &c.]

It is not our purpose here to follow the pilgrims to Canterbury; so, leaving them to make the best of their way, with all the assistance that music, mirth, humour, wit, and pathos can give their minds, or that the delicacies of the time as prepared for them by the Cook can furnish for their corporeal enjoyment, let us at once anticipate their arrival at Canterbury, their lodgment in one of those numerous inns that still, broken up into separate tenements, form such a peculiar feature in the ancient city, and their visit to the Cathedral, where one after the other the sacred relics are shown to them, and which they—kneeling—are allowed to kiss. Among these relics are the martyr's skull cased in silver, the blade of the sword with which he was slain, and the hair shirt he wore at the time of the murder. Then, too, the dazzling store of jewels, and vessels and ornaments in gold and silver, are shown to them (from behind a strong grating), if it be only to remind the pilgrims of their origin,—the pious liberality of previous pilgrims: a significant hint, and a powerful stimulus. Before our band of pilgrims leave Canterbury, there will be noticeable additions to the already incalculable amount of the wealth of Becket's shrine.

Having thus made ourselves familiar with the plan of the Poem, and given such a brief glimpse of the personages as we hope may induce a desire to know more of them, we proceed to the immediate object of these pages, which is to present from Chaucer the entire series of portraits as painted by himself at full length, and with a marvellous junction of breadth and minuteness: a series which, apart from their literary value, forms by far the richest body of materials possessed by any European country for the explanation of the manners, customs, characters, and modes of life and thought of the people during the Middle Ages. And as the portraits pass in review before us, we propose in our comments to illustrate as well as to explain whatever may seem necessary or desirable, in order to a due understanding and appreciation of the individual, or the class to which he belongs.

The characters of the 'Canterbury Tales' may be divided into four broad divisions, those relating to chivalry, to religion, professional men, and trade and commerce, and in such divisions shall we treat of them.

Section II.

CHIVALRY.—THE KNIGHT.

LTHOUGH we cannot trace the existence of chivalry backwards to so very remote a period as that referred to in the "Vision of Piers Ploughman,"[1] where we find that David "dubbed knights," yet there is much reason to doubt thetruth of the common opinion which ascribes its origin to the eleventh century, and considers that it was then first invented as a great moral antagonist to the deplorable evils of the time; for "a closely attentive as well as philosophical analysis of the history of European society in the middle ages proves this theory, or rather this supposition, to be deceitful. It shows us that chivalry was not, in the eleventh century, an innovation —an institution brought about by a special exigency which it was expressly adapted to meet. It arose much more simply, more naturally, and more silently; it was but the development of material facts long before existing—the spontaneous result of the Germanic manners and the feudal relations. It took its birth in the interior of the feudal mansions, without any set purpose beyond that of declaring, first, the admission of the young man to the rank and occupation of the warrior; secondly, the tie which bound him to his feudal superior—his lord, who conferred upon him the arms of knighthood. . . . . But when once the feudal society had acquired some degree of stability and confidence, the usages, the feelings, the circumstances of every kind, which attended the young man's admission among the vassal warriors, came under two influences, which soon gave them a fresh direction, and impressed them with a novel character. Religion and imagination, poetry and the church, says Guizot, laid hold on chivalry, and used it as a powerful means of attaining the objects they had in view, of meeting the moral wants which it was their business to provide for."

[1] By Robert [or William] Langlande; the most distinguished poetical work that had appeared before the productions of Gower and Chaucer.

THE KNIGHT.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"A knight there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the timè that he first began
To riden out, he lovèd chivalry."

Page 30.]

And the result was that character—of all characters, whether of romance or reality, the most popular for many ages—the Knight;—that strange incarnation of the most opposite qualities of our nature; whose gentleness in peace was no less remarkable than his ferocity in war; who was as pious in faith as he was not uncommonly irreligious in deed; who held such pure and lofty notions of women in the abstract, that they were to him women no longer, but a species of earthly goddesses, worthy of all reverence, and a life-long self-devotion to their service; yet who at the same time but too often exhibited in his career the grossest sensuality, the most utter disregard of their true welfare or dignity. To such discrepancies between the Knight's theory and practice in the matters of religion and love, doubtless there were many exceptions; to those concerning his disposition in peace and war there could be few or none. War was their "being's end and aim." "Take them," says Godwin, "in the chamber of peace, it is impossible to figure to ourselves anything more humane. When occasion called to them to succour the oppressed, and raise the dejected, overwhelmed by some brutal and insulting foe, they appeared like Gods descending from heaven for the consolation of mankind. But the garb of peace, however gracefully they wore it, they regarded as only an accident of their character. War was their profession, their favourite scene, the sustenance of their life. If it did not offer itself to them at home, they would seek it to the ends of the earth, and sell themselves to any master rather than not find occasion to prove the intrepidity of their temper and the force of their arm. When they entered the field of battle, they regarded the business of war not as a matter of dire and tremendous necessity, but as their selected pleasure. Their hearts were then particularly alive, and all their pulses beat with joy."[1] Froissart furnishes a happy illustration of this passage, in his account of the battle of Poitiers. "The prince of Wales (the Black Prince), who was as courageous and *cruel as a lion, took great pleasure this day in fighting and chasing his enemies;*" yet, when the battle was over, and the French king made prisoner, the same prince waited upon his illustrious captive at supper, with a tenderness and delicacy of respect, that it is impossible to read of unmoved. The period of Edward III. and of his gallant son is indeed the period of the most palmy state of chivalry; it is also the period of Chaucer; who, in "the Knight" and "the Squire," has shown us the two great and clearly distinguishable phases of the knightly character. In the one, we see the young, loving, enthusiastic, poetical, and

[1] Godwin's 'Life of Chaucer,' vol. ii. p. 237.

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[1] Godwin's 'Life of Chaucer,' vol. ii. p. 237.

accomplished aspirant for military honours; in the other, the aged veteran warrior, with whom the stern realities of life have sobered down much of its early romance.

"*A Knight* there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the timè that he first began
To riden out, he lovèd chivalry,
Truth and honóur, freedom and courtesy.
Full worthy was he in his lordès war,
And thereto had he ridden, no man far'.[1]
As well in Christendom as in Heatheness:
And ever honour'd for his worthiness.
At Alisandre[2] he was when it was won.
Full often time he had the board begun[3]
Aboven allè natïons in Prusse.
In Lettowe[4] had he reysèd[5], and in Russe,
No Christian man so oft of his degree.
In Gernade at the siege eke had he be
Of Algezir[6], and ridden in Belmarie.[7]
At Layas was he, and at Satalie,[8]
When they were won; and in the Greatè Sea[9]
At many a noble army had he be.
At mortal battles had he been fifteen,
And foughten for our faith at Tramissene[10]
In listès thriës, and aye slain his foe.
This ilkè worthy knight had been also,
Sometimè with the lord of Palathie,[11]
Against another heathen in Turkéy.
And evermore he had a sovereign prise.[12]
And though that he was worthy, he was wise;

[1] Farther.

[2] Alexandria, taken in 1365 by Pierre de Lusignan, king of Cyprus but immediately abandoned.

[3] He had been placed at the head of the table or board, as a compliment to his extraordinary merit.

[4] Lithuania. [5] Journeyed in military expeditions.

[6] The city of Algezir, or Algeçiras, was taken from the Moorish king of Granada in 1344, and the earls of Derby and Salisbury assisted at the siege.

[7] Supposed to refer to a place or kingdom of Africa. In the Glossary to Urry's Chaucer, the "country in Barbary, called by Vassens, Benamarin," is presumed to be the same as Belmarie.

[8] Layas, a town in Armenia, and Satalie, the ancient Attalia, were both taken by the king of Cyprus before mentioned; the former in 1367, the latter in 1352.

[9] Supposed to be the Mediterranean.

[10] Supposed to refer to a place or kingdom of Africa.

[11] Palathia in Anatolia. [12] Praise.

And of his port as meek as is a maid.
He never yet no villainy [1] ne said
In all his life, unto no manner wight:
He was a very perfect, gentle knight.
But for to tellen you of his array;
His horse was good, but he ne was nought gay.
Of fustïan he wearèd a gipon [2]
All bésmottered [3] with his habergeon, [4]
For he was late comén from his viáge,
And wentè for to dou [5] his pilgrimage."

In connection with the personal appearance of the knight, we may here observe, that in a very interesting manuscript of the 'Canterbury Tales,' written early in the fifteenth century, which was sold at the Duke of Bridgewater's sale at Ashridge, then belonged to the Duke of Sutherland, is now Lord Ellesmere's, and has been printed by the Chaucer Society, there is, at the commencement of each tale, a pictorial representation of the relater. The figures [6] are drawn and coloured with great care, and present a very minute delineation of the dress and costume of Chaucer's time. Woodcuts of them are in the present work. In the portrait of the Knight, the countenance is highly expressive of sedateness and dignity. His folded head-covering is of a dark colour. His gipon is also dark, but his under coat, which is discernible through the sleeves at his wrists, red. His legs are in armour, with gilt spurs. His dagger is in a red sheath by his side; and he wears little points or aiglets of red, tipped with gold, on his neck and shoulder. He and the monk are the only male pilgrims with gold ornaments. The artist has given the Wife of Bath gold too, yet she cannot have ranked with the Prioress or above the Merchant. Possibly the illuminator enjoyed the Wife's Prologue so much that he gilded her girdle, stirrup, &c., in witness of his approval.

In Leland's Itinerary we find the epitaph of the noble and valiant knight Matthew de Gourney, who, in his life, was at the battle of Benamaryn (probably the Belmarie mentioned by Chaucer, see the note to Belmarie in a preceding page), and afterwards at the siege of Algezir against the Saracens, and also at the battles of L'Escluse, of Cressy, of Deyngenesse, of Peyteres (Poitiers), of Nazare, of Ozrey, and at several other battles and sieges, in which he gained great praise and honour. This warrior, whose adventures so strikingly illustrate those of Chaucer's Knight, died in 1406, aged 96 years. It has been justly noticed, as a peculiar feature of the times, that Chaucer

[1] "Anything unbecoming a gentleman."—*Tyrrwhitt.*
[2] A short cassock. [3] Soiled. [4] Coat of mail. [5] Do.
[6] Todd's 'Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer.'

does *not* bring *his* hero from Cressy and Poitiers, but from Alexandria and Lithuania; as though comparatively slight services against infidels were then thought of more importance than the most brilliant victories where Christians alone were concerned. It appears that it was usual in the fourteenth century for military men to go to Prussia, in order to serve with the knights of the Teutonic order, who were in a constant state of warfare with their then heathen neighbours. The youngest son of Edward III., Thomas, duke of Gloucester, and Henry, earl of Derby (Bolingbroke), afterwards Henry IV., were among the distinguished men who shared in these expeditions.

"If," says Speght, "any desire to know the profession of those knights called Teutonic, it was thus:—They having their dwelling at Jerusalem, were bound to entertain pilgrims, and at occasion to serve in war against the Saracens. They were apparelled in white, and upon their uppermost garments did wear a thick cross. And for that this order was first begun by a rich Almaine, none were received into the same, save only gentlemen of the Dutch nation. After Jerusalem was last taken by the Saracens, anno 1184, these knights retired to Ptolemaida; and that being taken, into Germany, their own country; and whereas there also the people of Prussia used incursions upon their confines, they went unto Frederick II. their emperor, anno 1220, who granted them leave to make wars upon them, and to turn the spoil to the maintenance of their order. After their conquest of Prussia, these knights grew rich, and built there many temples, and places of residence for bishops, who also were enjoined to wear the habit of the order. Chaucer will have his Knight of such fame that he was both known and honoured of this order."

In war, as well as in peace, the fantastic as well as the more noble traits of chivalry were constantly being developed. The Knight fought well, no doubt, for his God or his sovereign, but it was his mistress that he thought of while fighting; and however he enhanced his renown by his feats of arms, what he most valued was the fresh lustre that he thereby added to his mistress' name. One of the strangest evidences of the existence of such feelings, is mentioned by Froissart, as having occurred during Edward III.'s expeditions against France; when he says, the knights who formed the army, wore a patch on the eye, having made a vow that it should not be removed until they had performed exploits worthy of their liege ladies. The liberality of the knights at times assumed an equally absurd aspect. When Alexander III. of Scotland repaired to London, attended by a hundred knights, at the time of the coronation of Edward I., the whole party, as soon as they had alighted, let loose their steeds, all most richly caparisoned, to be scrambled

for by the multitude. This was probably new to the English chivalry, and no doubt startled them not a little ; five, however, of the English nobles immediately followed the example set them. Lastly, the religion itself of chivalry, though a deep and genuine sentiment, had nothing to do with the intellect,—was of heaven for the elevation of earth,—but exercised little influence over the every-day business of life ; thus a knight's devotion was wont at times to assume a ludicrously indecorous form, even when his heart was most full of pious emotion. Here is an instance in point, from the delightful French historian of chivalry, M. de St. Palaye : Stephen Vignolles, surnamed Lahire, was proceeding in company with the Count de Dunois, to raise the siege of Montargis, in 1427. Drawing near the camp of the English, Lahire fell in with a chaplain, of whom he requested immediate absolution. The priest bade him confess his sins. Lahire replied that there was no time for confession, but that he had been guilty of all the usual sins of a soldier. Upon this the chaplain granted him absolution ; and Lahire, clasping his hands together, made the following prayer in his Gascon jargon : "God, I beg of thee, that thou wouldest this day do as much for Lahire, as thou wouldest Lahire should do for thee, if he were God, and thou wert Lahire."

We have spoken of the Knight's romance being sobered down, but it is only sobered down, not evaporated. With old and young the universal motto of the knighthood of Europe during his time was, "Tout l'amour, tout à l'honor." But there was a class of knights of a very different kind, as Jusserand shows. One of the letters of Wm. Gold will be enough to give an idea of the sort of men they were. It was addressed to Louis of Gonzaga, Lord of Mantua, Aug. 9, 1378, and concerned a French girl, Jeannette.

". . . . Let her be detained at my suit, for if you should have a thousand golden florins spent for her, I will pay them without delay, for if I should have to follow her to Avignon I will obtain this woman. Now, my lord, should I be asking a trifle contrary to law, yet ought you not to cross me in this, for some day I shall do more for you than a thousand united women could effect ; and if there be need of me in a matter of greater import, you shall have for the asking a thousand spears at my back."

But now let us turn from the Knight as an example of the illustrious supporters of chivalry, in order to look at him in connection with the warlike system of England to which he belonged, and which, though Chaucer has been silent upon the point, must have imposed upon him a share in all the great national expeditions of his day. Our military strength depended entirely on the number and the heroic temper of

the soldiers whom the sovereign was able to call into the field. The *number* was secured by the *service de chivaler, per servitium militare*, or tenure by knights' service, introduced at the Norman Conquest, and swept away, among so many other relics of the past, in the civil wars of the seventeenth century. The mode of its operation was this. A soldier had land lent him sufficient for his maintenance; it might be some six or eight hundred acres, according to the productiveness of the soil, and the value of the situation, or other circumstances; the income produced might be 15*l.* or 20*l.* per annum, old money, until toward the time of Edward II., when the value was not to sink below 40*l.* It was his hope, doubtless, to add to his income by spoils taken in battle; or to raise himself to the rank of a feudal lord by sharing in the conquest of foreign lands. Any way, his valour was his dependence; for if he were neither by nature a hero, nor ambitious, he was nevertheless bound by his tenure to be ready at all times to follow to the wars the lord who lent him his lands, and to remain with him in military service forty days in every year; a period subsequently increased to sixty, except when the agreement of infeudation named a shorter period. If unable to attend in person he found a substitute. The clergy, women, and old men, were also compelled to find substitutes.

Here we see the idea of knighthood in its simplest form, because reduced to its original elements—land sufficient for the soldier's maintenance, and military service for its use. It is important to observe that the land in all these cases was, as we have said, lent, not given at first, and probably resumable at the pleasure of the grantor. But as the feudal system became consolidated, both parties began to look more and more at the arrangement we have described, as one that it was not desirable to disturb; and so it grew into a custom, and thence into a right, of the vassal or tenant to consider the land he enjoyed as his own, while he rendered the services originally agreed upon. The transition was easy after that to the eldest son assuming the same position when the father died, and ultimately to the descent of the land in the collateral as well as in the direct line of succession, females even not being excluded

The general idea of knighthood above given, varied in infinite ways. The crown, wishing to secure or reward some bold adherent, bestows on him great estates; these, let their extent or number be what they may, consist of so many knights' fees, for each of which he is bound to furnish a knight for the king's service. Through the Conquest, England became the entire possession of the sovereign, and was parcelled out in this way into about 60,000 knights' fees.

But we often see in the middle ages that the power thus given for the support of the crown proved its bane, especially

in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The chief, able to command the military services of so many knights, was sometimes tempted to lead them to war, in order to curb or dethrone his sovereign. We read of *armies* of retainers; and the word is no poetical licence, for soldiers of humbler standing, holding half a knight's fee, and rendering half the term of service required of a knight, that is, twenty days, or a quarter of a knight's fee, and rendering but ten days' service, often swelled the ranks of a knight-in-chief. Other claims on his vassals grew out of the main one. In his warlike life, nothing more possible than his being one day taken prisoner—his vassal knights must make *aids* for ransoming him; his eldest son, in course of time, must be admitted into the order of knighthood here, again, their aids are required; his eldest daughter is to be wedded—their aids must contribute to portion her. Hallam considers the aids to have formed the commencement of modern taxation. Then the heirs of the lord's vassals cannot succeed to their fathers' lands without making him a *relief*, that is, a payment in the nature of a composition; and if they be under age, both they and their lands are in his power. He may marry them to whomsoever he pleases, unless they can make good a refusal on account of disparity of rank, crime, or bodily infirmity; as to personal liking, no weight is allowed to such a trifling consideration; if it happen to run counter to the lord's views, why he makes no scruple to solace himself with their inheritance, or as much of it as the proposed match would have been worth to him. In any case, he enjoys all the profits of their lands until their majority; and if he happen to be in want of money, he sells the wardship outright to a stranger. There is a power in all this, often felt as grievous; but the lord has to submit to the same in respect to the sovereign. His own heir, though of full age, cannot succeed to his estates without making the king a present of a whole year's revenue. There were other services of the vassal, which show strikingly the intimate and honourable character of the connection between him and his lord. "It was," says Hallam, "a breach of faith to divulge the lord's counsel, to conceal from him the machinations of others, to injure his person or fortune, or to violate the sanctity of his roof, and the honour of his family. In battle he was bound to lend his horse to his lord when dismounted, to adhere to his side while fighting, and to go into captivity as a hostage for him when taken. His attendance was due at the lord's courts, sometimes to witness and sometimes to bear a part in the administration of justice."

So important a matter as the granting of a fief, would naturally be attended by ceremonies accordant with the customs of the middle ages. These ceremonies were highly

solemn, expressive, and picturesque, and were of three kinds—homage, fealty, and investiture. It is a curious characteristic of the many lofty sentiments infused in, and giving strength to the feudal system, that the most honourable of these ceremonies, that of homage, was the most humble on the part of the vassal; but then it was evidently received in a generous and affectionate spirit. The frank tenant (as the freeholder was called), with ungirded belt, uncovered head, and with his sword and spurs laid aside, knelt on both knees before his lord, who sat, and placing his hands jointly together between his lord's hands, he spoke thus: "I become your man from this day forward, of life and limb, and of earthly worship, and unto you shall be true and faithful, and bear you faith for the tenements that I claim to hold of you, saving the faith that I owe to our sovereign lord the king;" and having said this, he kissed the lord's cheek, and the lord kissed his mouth. No oath was here taken; but in substituting the ceremony of fealty for that of homage, when ecclesiastics, or persons of humbler military and social rank, were concerned, the oath only, similar in its terms to the declaration above stated, was taken without kneeling, and not unfrequently by proxy.

Investiture was the formal giving into the tenant's hands the lands granted, and which was done, as far as was possible, literally by the lord or his deputy, or symbolically by the delivery (often in a church) of a turf, a stone, or some other of the *ninety-eight* prevalent modes enumerated by Du Cange.

Thus was the feudal system built up; thus did it rise into power and prosperity. How it declined and fell may be shown in fewer words. As the vassal found his actual power increase, by the acknowledgment of his rights, and the general development of the resources of the country, it was inevitable that he should use it for his own purposes, and that as he did so, the lord's power should decline. The sense of gratitude passed away with the sense of dependence. Trade and commerce became to many more agreeable than war, and were greatly promoted at the expense of the latter, by the practice that gradually obtained of military service being commuted for money payment. A town residence was found safer and more pleasant in many respects than a country one; and lastly, the sovereign himself (by the reign of Henry II.) began to prefer an army of mercenaries who would at all times study his pleasure, if he only studied their pay and opportunities of plunder, to an army of vassals who took the liberty of thinking how every military movement concerned their interests as well as his—who were too often, to his view, reasoning and advising in the council, when they should have been obeying and fighting in the field.

THE SQUIRE.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"A lover and a lusty bachelor. . . .
Embroider'd was he, as it were a mead,
All full of fresshè flowrès, white and reed. . . .
Short was his goun, with sleevès long and wide."

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THE SQUIRE.

s in the description of the Knight we have seen a full and complete development of that character which it was the object of the chivalric institutions to create, so in the Squire we perceive the preliminary stage of the process; the foundation, as it were, upon which the knightly character has been built. Thus whilst our knight fondly, but not unreasonably anticipates, that what he is, his son (the Squire) shall one day be; he cannot but at the same time remember that that son, with all his youthful grace and enthusiasm, his mental and bodily accomplishments, is but an epitome of his former self. And how exquisitely has Chaucer painted this young aspirant for military glories! The description, like the individual it celebrates, is "as fresh as is the month of May;" like the airs of that sweet season, it seems filled with the sense of new life—of growing vigorous beauty. With the Knight

> "there was his son, a young Squiér,
> A lover and a lusty bachelor,
> With lockès curl'd as they were laid in press.
> Of twenty year he was of age, I guess.
> Of his statûre he was of even length,
> And wonderly deliver,[1] and great of strength.
> And he had been some time in chevachie[2]
> In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy;
> And borne him well, as in so little space,
> In hope to standen in his lady's grace.
> Embroidered was he, as it were a mead,
> All full of freshe flow'res, white and red.
> Singing he was, or floyting[3] all the day:
> He was as fresh as is the month of May.
> Short was his gown, with sleevès long and wide.
> Well could he sit on horse, and fairè ride.
> He couldè songès well make, and indite,
> Joust, and eke dance, and well pourtray, and write.
> So hot he lovèd, that by nightertale[4]
> He slept no more than doth a nightingale.
> Courteous he was, lowly, and serviceable,
> And carv'd before his father at the table."

In Furnivall's 'Boke of Nurture' (1868) is an amusing illustration of this part of the Squire's duty.

[1] Active, nimble.
[2] A military expedition.
[3] Playing on the flute.
[4] Night-time.

"Sett neuer on fysche nor flesche, beaste, nor fowle trewly
More than ij fingurs, and a thombe for that is curtesie.
Touche neuer with your right hande no maner mete surely."

The tale which was told by the Squire to the pilgrims, and is referred to by Milton as

"The story of Cambuscan bold,"

is a tale of the very first order of imaginative romance, but, unhappily, left imperfect.

To Chaucer's description, we may add a few words illustrative of the miniature portrait of the Squire in the manuscript before mentioned. His locks are there curiously curled, and give the idea of their having been "laid in press;" whilst his short new-fashioned Richard II. long-sleeved cloak fluttering in the wind—as to the shockingness of which, see the Parson's Tale—is embroidered so as to give something of the appearance of the "mead all full of freshe flow'res, white and red;" the ground being of a green colour, lined with red, on which are small white spots or ornaments. His pantaloons are white, the upper part adorned with ermine. He wears a light but high blue cap, embroidered in the front. His horse is on the gallop, and evidently under graceful as well as skilful management. Such was the Squire of the reign of Richard II. at the age of twenty years, or within a few months of the period when he would be admitted into the knightly order. Let us now see what was the nature and what were the details of that education which produced such results.

Up to his seventh year, the boy destined for the honours of the military profession, spent his time among the females of the family; he then entered upon the first stage of his career. He received the appellation of page, or valet, and was admitted to the society of his father, and of his father's friends and visitors. If his family were sufficiently affluent, companions of his own age, and with similar views, but of more straitened circumstances, were educated with him in the same house, who became his earliest friends and associates, and who often remained through life his devoted brethren in war. But if, on the contrary, his own family were comparatively poor, he then himself entered the house of some other nobleman or gentleman to receive the requisite training. Among the very earliest lessons instilled into his mind was that of unbounded admiration for the knightly character, as it was continually pointed out to him, in the persons of the most worthy and accomplished warriors of the time. Upon them therefore he looked with awe, wonder, and earnest love; they were the standards of excellence he set up in his own mind, by which he would constantly measure himself. The physical exercises calculated to strengthen his youthful frame were now begun. As he

approached nearer to the period of the honours and duties of the Squire, "the love of God and the ladies," in the irreverent but characteristic language of the time, was constantly cherished in him: he was taught, on the one hand, that no true votary of knighthood ever undertook any important adventure, or entered into any serious engagement, without previous prayer and devotional exercise; and on the other, that the knight who thought or spoke of the female sex with familiarity or disrespect, was a recreant to his order, a most ignoble member of a most noble profession. Carrying out this principle, he was to consider it one of the highest privileges of his calling to be able to relieve their distress or avenge their wrong; and lastly, he was to look upon their opinion as the great tribunal where all his actions were to be judged—where he was to be disgraced by censure, or honoured by applause. Godwin remarks that "it is the remnant of this sentiment which has given to the intercourse of the sexes, from the days of chivalry to the present time, a refinement and a spirit of sanctity and honour wholly unknown to the ancient world."[1] It was, then, only a fitting provision in the education of the page, that he should select at this early period of youth, from among the virgins whose society he frequented, one, to whose service he was to devote himself, towards whom he might show the practical effects of the lessons so carefully inculcated. Thus passed his life until the fourteenth year. He was now raised to the dignity of Squire; and with ceremonies that impressed still more deeply upon the mind of the excited youth a consciousness of the importance of the occasion. His father and mother, or two of his near relations, each holding a lighted taper, led him to the altar, upon which a sword and girdle had been previously laid. These the ministering priest took up, and having pronounced a benediction over them, girt the youth with his first warlike insignia.

During the next or final period, that of probation for the highest office, the Squire spent a great part of each day in the open air, in exercises which conduced alike to the vigour of his body, the suppleness of his limbs, and the precision both of his eye and arm. He dressed and trained his own horses; he practised leaping, running, and mounting on horseback clad in all his armour; he scaled walls with the assistance merely of his hands and feet; above all, he paid the greatest attention to those sports which, as it were, prefigured the exploits of that grand arena, the tournament, in which he hoped one day to exhibit his prowess and knightly accomplishments. "One of these was the

[1] 'Life of Chaucer,' vol. i. p. 411.

Pel (in Latin, *palus*), practised with a post, or the stump of a tree, about six feet in height, which the youth, armed at all points, attacked vigorously on foot; and while he struck or thrust at the different parts which were marked to represent the head, breast, shoulders, and legs of an antagonist, he was taught to cover himself carefully with his shield in the act of rising to the blow. Similar to this was the Quintain, where the attack was made on horseback. A pole or spear was set upright in the ground, with a shield strongly bound to it, and against this the youth tilted with his lance, in full career, endeavouring to burst the ligatures of the shield and bear it to the earth. A steady aim and a firm seat were acquired from this exercise, a severe fall being often the consequence of failure in the attempt to strike down the shield. This, however, at the best, was but a monotonous exercise, and therefore the pole in process of time was supplanted by the more stimulating figure of a misbelieving Saracen, armed at all points, and brandishing a formidable wooden sabre. The puppet moved freely upon a pivot or spindle, so that unless it were struck with the lance adroitly in the centre of the face or breast, it rapidly revolved, and the sword, in consequence, smote the back of the assailant in his career, amidst the laughter of the spectators. . . . In addition to these exercises, the young squires and pages were taught to career against each other with staves or canes; and sometimes a whole party exhibited on horseback the various evolutions of a battle, but without the blows or bloodshed of a tournament."[1] Amidst all this preparation for the warfare that was to be the business of their lives, they did not forget to cultivate the gentler arts and accomplishments of peace. Like our young Squire, they learned to make "songs," and "indite;" to "pourtray" well, and "eke dance;" like him, they might often have been heard "singing" or "floyting" all the day.

He now entered upon a life involving many and peculiar duties. It was an essential principle of chivalry, that no office was sordid if performed with a worthy object; and so completely was this principle carried into effect, that the candidates for knighthood were not merely willing, but proud to wait upon their superiors, and perform for them the most menial services. And truly the dignity of the person raised the employment and made it no longer menial; the spirit in which it was performed gave it even grace and lustre.

The squires were divided into many different classes according to the employments which they were appointed to: viz., squire of the body or person, of his lady or his lord (the

[1] 'Pictorial Hist. of England,' vol. i. p. 649.

first of these services was a grade to the second); squire of the chamber, or chamberlain; carving squire; squire of the stable; squire of the wine cellar; squire of the pantry, &c. The most honourable of all these was the squire of the body, for that reason called also, squire of honour; a post calculated to prepare the Squire in various ways for the honours and duties of knighthood. Thus for a long time the youthful Squire acquired in silence, while present in quality of carver at repasts and festivals, the art of expressing his ideas with propriety. The Lord de Joinville, in his youth, filled this office at the Court of St. Louis; and in the palace of kings it sometimes devolved upon their children. Froissart particularly mentions that the young Count de Foix, like Chaucer's Squire, carved before his father. The other squires prepared the tables, supplied the guests with water for washing their hands, carried in the various courses of the entertainment, watched over the pantry and cellar, and were constantly attentive that those present were provided with everything they required. When the repast was over, they made arrangements for the amusements which followed, in which they likewise took part, with the damsels belonging to the suites of the ladies of high rank. After this, the squires served up to the company the spices, sweetmeats, claret, pigment, and hippocras, which always ended such feasts. A bumper was also taken on going to bed, and that was called *vin du cocher*. In these entertainments, as well as in actual war, due gradation of rank was carefully observed by the knights and squires. The former appropriated to themselves the most costly apparel and arms; and did not permit their squires to assume the same dress as themselves. Their mantles were composed of scarlet or cloth of gold, lined with ermine; the squires wore silver cloth and the less expensive furs; while the dress of the people consisted of woollen stuffs of the most common manufactured colours. So great was the attention, in short, which they paid to these matters, that when the knights chose to dress in damask silks, the squires were obliged to confine themselves to satin; and if at any time the squires were permitted damask, then the knights were seen in robes of velvet stiff with gold. So again in their armour and arms, the knights were careful to distinguish themselves from their squires; the latter being only allowed a slight cuirass, a sword, and a buckler; while a tough and weighty lance, a hauberk, and a double coat of linked mail, rendered the former nearly invulnerable. This being considered, it was certainly humane to make it a point of honour that no knight should attack a squire. Of all the services rendered by the squire to the knight, the most important were naturally

those which were connected directly or indirectly with the grand object of the lives of both, war. "When the knight mounted his horse, the squires of the body held his stirrup; and other squires carried the various pieces of his armour, such as the brassarts,[1] the gauntlets, the helmet, and the buckler, on the road. With regard to the cuirass, or hauberk, the knight was no less careful of its preservation than the Greek and Roman soldiers were of their bucklers. Other squires bore the pennon, the lance, and the sword. While merely on a journey, the knight rode a short-tailed, ambling-paced horse—a palfrey or a courser; and the war horses were led by the squires, who always keeping them in their right hand, they were called dextriers. The war horse was delivered to the knight on the appearance of an enemy, or when he was about entering the field of battle: this was what they called mounting the great horse. When travelling, the squire carried his master's helmet resting upon the pommel of his saddle; and when preparing for fight, this helmet, and all the other parts of his arms, offensive and defensive, were given him by the different squires who had them in their keeping, all evincing equal eagerness in assisting him to arm. By this means they were taught the art of arming themselves on a future day, with the despatch and caution necessary for the protection of their persons. And, in fact, it was an art which demanded much skill and ability, to place together and fasten the joints of the cuirass, and the other pieces of armour; to fit and lace the helmet upon the head with correctness; and to nail and rivet carefully the visor or ventail."[2] When the battle began, and the knights on the heavy war horses had come to blows, the squires ranged themselves behind their masters, to whom they had delivered their swords, and remained almost idle spectators of the battle. And this usage might easily be preserved, on account of the manner in which the cavalry were ranged; namely in one long line, backed by another line, of squires. These, though not engaged in offensive war, were, however, busily employed in the preservation of their masters. In the terrible shock of the two adverse lines, rushing upon each other, with their couched lances, numbers were overthrown and wounded; and then, raising themselves up, snatched their swords, battle axes, or clubs, to defend or avenge themselves, while others endeavoured to seize every possible advantage over their fallen enemies. On these occasions the squires were attentive to the movements of their masters, furnishing them with new arms, warding off

[1] Arm pieces.

[2] M. de St. Palaye; as translated in the 'Retrospective Review,' in a paper to which we may here generally express our obligations.

the blows which might be aimed at them, bringing fresh horses for renewed combat, or taking care of whatever prisoners they made in the field. A delightful illustration of one of these duties—that of aiding in the defence of the knight in actual battle—is afforded by Froissart in his narrative of the battle of Poitiers. The French king John fought on foot, in the very midst of a dense crowd of combatants ; and had close by his side his son Philip, a boy of sixteen ; who, constantly watching his father, and heedless of his own danger, kept crying out to him when he saw a blow aimed, "Father, guard yourself on the right!"—"Father, guard yourself on the left!" and thus probably contributed to save the life of the French sovereign, who was soon after taken prisoner.

We have before alluded to the honourable spirit in which these services were received by the knights ; and which, no doubt, was the true secret of the spirit in which they were rendered. From the records of the same battle we may adduce an example of the knightly behaviour to the Squire. Among the English noblemen who more especially distinguished themselves at Poitiers, was the Lord James Audley, who, "with the aid of his four squires, fought always in the chief of the battle : he was sore hurt in the body and in the visage ; as long as his breath served him, he fought : at last, at the end of the battle, his four squires took him, and brought him out of the field, and laid him under a hedge side for to refresh him ; and they unarmed him, and bound up his wounds as well as they could." This had scarcely been done, before a message came from the Black Prince, who had evidently been full of admiration of Lord Audley's conduct ; and which message gave such new life to the wounded knight, that he caused himself to be borne in a litter to the Prince ; who took him tenderly in his arms, kissed him, made him "great cheer," and in the presence of the most distinguished of the English knights, said to him aloud, "Sir James, I and all ours take you in this journey for the best doer in arms : and to the intent to furnish you the better to pursue the wars, I retain you for ever to be my knight, with five hundred marks, of yearly revenues, the which I shall assign you on mine heritage in England." This was a noble act of the Prince's ; let us see whether Lord Audley's conduct has not added fresh lustre to it. On his return to his tent, he sent for several noblemen of his lineage ; and then making them his witnesses, at once divided among his four squires, for them and their heirs, the entire gift he had just received. But the squires had also the opportunity afforded them of exerting their powers in battle for their own especial advantage ; such, for instance, as in the taking of prisoners. As

a proof of this, we may narrate a very interesting incident that occurred during Chaucer's lifetime, in the vicinity of his own residence and labours as a clerk of the works at Westminster, and in connection with his friend, relative, and patron, the great duke of Lancaster.

At the battle of Najara, in Spain, during the Black Prince's campaign in that country, two of Sir John Chandos' squires took a Spanish nobleman prisoner; who, according to the custom of the time, was formally awarded to them by the Prince himself, and Sir John. The squires took their prize to England; but soon allowed him to return home in order to collect his ransom money, detaining meanwhile the nobleman's eldest son. Time passed, and brought no news of the nobleman or the ransom money. But now a new state of things arose. John of Gaunt, in the prosecution of his claims upon Spain, desired to get hold of the hostage, in order to make political use of him; and induced the King, Richard, to demand him from the squires. They were willing to render him on receipt of the ransom money, which John of Gaunt was by no means willing to pay; so no prisoners were forthcoming. Search was everywhere made for them, but in vain; and at last the two squires were committed to the Tower. They managed, however, to escape, and take refuge in the Sanctuary at Westminster. Enraged by their resistance, the duke did not hesitate to violate the privileges of the place, by sending an armed force under the command of the constable of the Tower, Sir Alan Boxhall, to seize them by force, if they could not obtain possession of them by persuasion. One of them, Schakell, was prevailed upon to trust himself without the walls, and was immediately re-committed to the Tower; but the other, Haule, refused to listen to them, and, drawing a short sword, prepared to resist. They rushed upon him, but he defended himself with remarkable spirit and skill—twice they drove him round the choir of the abbey church, and still he seemed unassailable; when one of the cowardly assassins got behind him in some way unnoticed, and clove his head. And thus perished the brave squire; and with him one of the monks of the abbey, who nobly strove to protect him. To make the outrage still more gross, it took place during the performance of high mass. Even now—one of the squires dead, and the other in prison—no one could discover the prisoner; and it was not until the Court resolved to do at last what it ought to have done at first, and so have prevented the sacrifice of valuable lives, namely, pay the ransom due, that the mystery was cleared up, by a truly touching discovery of the person of the young Spaniard, in the groom that had served

Schakell as a hired servant during the whole time of his imprisonment in the Tower, and had previously risked his own life in defence of Haule, at the time of the murder in the abbey; moved in some degree, perhaps, by personal attachment, but still more, we should say, by a chivalric sense of the wrong that was attempted to be done the squires, in defiance of all the usages of chivalry.

We must now follow our hero through the last and long wished-for ceremonies which are to make him a knight—a member of that illustrious band whose glories have so dazzled his youthful vision. At the age of twenty-one he is eligible. Solemn and deeply impressive, even to the least imaginative of those concerned, were the rites attending the inauguration of the youthful warrior. He was first stripped of his garments, and put into the bath; on leaving this he was clad in a white tunic, as the symbol of purity; in a red robe as an emblem of the blood he was to shed in the cause of the faith; and, lastly, in a black doublet, as a token of the dissolution which awaited him as well as the rest of mankind. Thus purified and clothed, he kept a rigorous fast for twenty-four hours. When evening came, he entered the church, and there spent the night in solitude and prayer. His arms were piled upon the altar before him—an object of continual and fervent contemplation. His first act in the morning was confession, which it was expected should be more than usually strict and devotional; he then received the solemn sacrament of the Eucharist. The mass of the Holy Ghost was now performed, followed commonly by a sermon on the duties of a knight, and on the nature of the life opening upon the novice. His sponsors (certain approved knights) now accompanied him to the chancel or choir, and there pledged themselves for the rectitude of his future conduct. The priest then took the sword from the novice's neck, where it hung, and having blessed it, again attached it to his neck. But one thing now remained—the appearance before the hero or lord who was to confer the actual investiture of knighthood. To him, therefore, the Squire (soon to lose that title for ever) went, and, falling upon his knees, demanded the honour to which he aspired. "To what end," inquired the lord, "do you desire to enter into this Order? If it is that you may be rich, repose yourself, and be honoured without doing honour to knighthood, then you are unworthy of it, and would be to the knighthood you should receive, what the simonical clergyman is to the prelacy." A modest but collected and dignified answer to this question was expected; which given, the lord granted his request, and the proper oath was administered. Then came thronging round the young man knights, and frequently ladies,

assisting him to arm; putting on first the spurs, then the hauberk; next the breastplate,—the brassarts or arm-pieces,—and the gauntlets; and lastly the sword. Then he was dubbed, to use the modern English expression, derived from the French adoubé, or adopted. The lord rose from his seat, went up to him, and gave the *accolade*, or three strokes with the flat of his sword upon the shoulder or nape of the neck, adding, sometimes, a blow with the palm of the hand upon the cheek, saying, "In the name of God, Saint Michael, and Saint George, I make thee a knight;" and, occasionally, concluding with "Be thou brave, bold, and loyal." They now handed to the youthful knight his helmet, and brought him his horse, upon which he sprang, "vaulting like the feathered Mercury" into the saddle, and, brandishing his sword and lance, caracolled his horse along the pavement. On quitting the church, he exhibited his grace and dexterity in a similar manner to the populace outside; whom he found eagerly waiting for their share of the spectacle.

We may add, there were classes of esquires who never advanced beyond that dignity.

It often happened, that one who had finished his warlike apprenticeship, and received his knight's fee (the land that was to support him for life, and which he had generally by inheritance), was indisposed or unfit to spend the rest of his life in the toils of war, and made no effort to get himself dubbed. Such an one might be styled by courtesy, knight, amongst his country neighbours. There were other squires, again, who would fail in obtaining the necessary qualification,—a knight's fee,—and were therefore excluded from knighthood. Statutes were passed to compel squires who had the suitable requisites of birth and fortune to claim knighthood, on peril of distraint on their lands; so that they might show themselves properly trained in arms, and provided with accoutrements, for the service of their lords, the king, and the country. But as time passed, and the English nation grew more intent on pursuits alien to war, and the introduction of artillery made the study and practice of war more the business of a class than of the nation generally, there was less and less necessity for compelling men to become soldiers whether they liked it or not; and so a large number of squires, comfortably settled on their feudal manors, came at last to be roused from their life of peaceful enjoyment only when some very pressing occasion kindled the old fires; then down from the walls of the English manor-houses were plucked the sword and buckler, often rusted with disuse, and the coat of mail was donned, and forth sallied the fine old English gentleman to fight, or seem to fight, for

loyalty, friendship, or patriotism. We may especially instance the times of the Commonwealth.

The last change would be when dubbing ceased altogether; and the knight, and the landed squire, alike merged into that respectable class which is still identified with country life—the peaceful, well-to-do Country Squire of modern days.

On Chaucer's duties as a Squire at the Court of Edward III., see the Chaucer Society's 'Life Records of Chaucer, Part II.,' 'The Household Ordinances of King Edward II., June, 1323 (as englished by Francis Tate in March, 1601), with extracts from those of King Edward IV.,' ed. F. J. Furnivall. No Household Book of Edward III. is now known; but no doubt Chaucer was like one of Edward IV.'s 'Squyers of Household XL. chosen men of there possession, worship, and wisdom,' of whom twenty always attended the king 'in ryding and going [walking] at alle tymes,' and served him at his table. We may be sure also that he entered with zest into this part of his duty.

'These Esquires of housold, of old be accustumed, winter and summer, in afternoones and in eveninges, to drawe to Lordes Chambres within Court, there to keep honest company after there cunninge, in talking of Cronicles of Kinges, and of others pollicies, or in pipeing or harpeing, songinges, or other actes marcealls, to helpe to occupie the Court, and accompanie estraingers, till the time require of departing.'

We may depend on it that the Canterbury Pilgrims were not the first set of good fellows that Chaucer had amused.

THE YEOMAN.

FTER the descriptions of the Knight and the Squire, Chaucer continues—

"A yeoman had he, and serváants no mo[1]
At that time, for him lustè ridè so ;
And he was clad in coat and hood of green.
A sheaf of peacock arrows, bright and keen,
Under his belt be bare full thriftily.
Well could he dress his tackle yeomanly :
His arrows droopèd not with feathers low,
And in his hand he bare a mighty bow.
A not-head[2] had he, with a brown visage.
Of woodcraft could he well all the usage.
Upon his arm he bare a gay bracér,[3]
And by his side a sword, and a bucklér ;
And on that other side a gay daggére
Harnessèd well, and sharp as point of spear.
A Christopher[4] on his breast, of silver sheen.
A horn he bare, the baudrick was of green ;
A forester was he, soothly as I guess,"

In the Yeoman (an abbreviation of yeonge-man, says Tyrrwhitt) we have a fine example of a class which included very much of the pith and power of English manhood in the old warlike times, and to which we can trace a large proportion of the robust qualities of our present powerful middle class. His brown visage is stamped with hearty honest manliness, derived from the vigorous exercise of such faculties as it has pleased his Maker to endow him with. This is a lusty fellow to sing and laugh with the best. Why not? He has a clear conscience, and good intentions : though Chaucer does not directly tell us so, we are as confident of it as if he had ; for these

[1] More.

[2] A name still given in the North to the knob at the end of a staff. Tyrwhitt thinks it should be nut-head, that is to say, like a nut, from the hair being cut short ; since called a Round-head, for the same reason.

[3] "A bracer," says Ascham, "serves two purposes : one to save the arrow from the string when loosed upon it, and the coat from creasing ; and the other that the string, gliding sharply and quickly off the bracer, may make a sharper shoot."

[4] St. Christopher, as the patron of field sports, and as presiding also over the state of the weather, was of course pre-eminently the forester's guardian saint, the object of his especial veneration, the power which of all others among the saintly class it was his interest to propitiate.

virtues are, to our mind, guaranteed by that mastery of, and love for an honest vocation, shown in his dressing his tackle so yeomanly, in his knowing so well all the usages of woodcraft, and generally in his graceful and gallant equipments. And truly, a more picturesque description of a picturesque personage one could hardly desire; and that description obtains now a new value from its enabling us to form an opinion of these small independent farmers; who, most important at the time of Chaucer, and for several centuries before and after, have in the end so dwindled away, or changed, that the commentators of Chaucer seem quite unable to give us anything like a comprehensive or definite view of them. Nothing but scattered hints, or isolated facts, and these latter often contradictory, do we find, either in their writings or elsewhere. The obscurity in which the subject rests, is curiously manifested in their bewilderment as to why the squire should have an attendant, and the knight none. One cuts the Gordian knot by assuming that the Yeoman must be, after all, the knight's servant (Tyrrwhitt); whilst another, equally decisive, asserts, Chaucer intended no such thing; and favours us with his own theory, that the fact of the knight's being without a servant, is "in unison with his reserved and unassuming character" (Todd). All the while, it is not perceived, that the son of the knight has no independent standing; and it is hardly observed, that the absence of any badge of servitude, such as it was usual for ordinary servants of the nobility and gentlemen to wear, and the character of our Yeoman's arms, approximating to those worn by persons of gentle blood, give reason to infer, that he is no menial or serf, but a free-born man, standing in the front ranks of the common people; and, in all probability, a servant by feudal tenure only, rendering a limited attendance for lands that he holds of the knight and his family. Waterhouse refers to this class of Yeomen, who, "having been servants or tenants to great men, have either had land given to them, or by industry and thrift (blessed by God) been purchasers of land *in fee* to them and their heirs; and that in such sort for the quality, and in such proportion for the value, that the law requires jurymen to be made of," &c. The truth is, yeoman life had many phases, including many degrees of servitude, many varieties of landholders, and many kinds of feudal obligation. Some possessed considerable patrimonies. Yeomen are mentioned, who lived about half a century after Chaucer, that were able to spend out of their freeholds as much as 130*l.* a year. Chaucer's miller speaks of his "estate of yeomanry," a property that was evidently often held in connection with some of the trades that more directly sprang from the cultivation of land—as that of millers, farmers, maltsters

&c. ; whose fee to the lord would be generally paid in kind, as meal, malt, or some other produce, as an acknowledgment that the right of the land still lay in the lord. The military Yeoman would in most cases be supported by the income his land yielded, as the knight was by *his ;* and when it fell short, he would eke it out with the spoils of battle, and with actual pay, when he served abroad, or for any great length of time at home. We should guess, from the value and character of our Yeoman's accoutrements, that his patrimony is capable of supporting him pretty handsomely while he is roving about, and that he belongs to the class just mentioned—that of the military Yeoman. The training of these soldiers, though carried on in a somewhat desultory manner, may be said to have begun like the squire's in childhood, and to have been steadily continued up to the period of active service It consisted, in addition to the ordinary and popular sports by which the frame was sought to be rendered robust and agile—such as running, leaping, wrestling, swimming, and so on—of a modification of the warlike sports of the young nobility. Thus the quintain was permitted to the commoner, on the substitution of a sand-bag and a board for a shield and a Saracen. The quarter-staff, peculiarly an old English weapon, and a truly formidable one, in the use of which the Yeoman was almost without a competitor, consisted of a heavy stick, four or five feet in length, on the middle of which closed the hand with a grasp of iron, while the combatant slipped his other hand to either extremity with marvellous rapidity ; and thus, unless the stroke were escaped with equal quickness of eye and foot, brought the weapon suddenly down on the head or shoulders of the antagonist. In defence it had equal merit ; a turn of the wrist sufficing to guard the combatant on every side for a wide range, so that to approach him was next to impossible. Until very recent times, the quarter-staff has been a favourite sport at our country fairs and holiday meetings ; but at present, as far as we can learn, the art and mystery of quarter-staff has fairly ceased from the land. The fond mothers of our degenerate days would shriek in terror, to see their children engaged in such dangerous sports, as the youth of Chaucer's time, from high to low, were taught to delight in. It is certainly no longer a desideratum that the growing generation should be trained to war ; but, at the same time, they are not likely to be trained to that firm development of their physical organs, which war training gave them, and which is one of the first of earthly blessings. Modern effeminacy produces a train of miseries not less real or important, though less obvious to a superficial view, than the ferocity which throws so deep a shadow over the habits of our hardy ancestors.

Chaucer's Yeoman is evidently one equipped for "real service," according to the statutes of his time ; which required a bow of the archer's own height, with arrows a yard in length, notched at the extremity to fit the string, and fletched with the feathers of the goose, the eagle, or the peacock. The use of this instrument was taught with exceeding care. Bow and arrows entered into the education of children ; and *would have been* the favourite sport of youth, but that it was too much forced on them by edicts of kings, and the authority of nobles. By a law of the thirteenth century, every person having an annual income of more than one hundred pence, was obliged to furnish himself with a serviceable bow and arrows ; and in the reign of Edward III. all persons were compelled by proclamation to practise archery on a certain number of days in the year, excepting during the hours of divine service ; and at the same time a number of rustic sports were strictly forbidden, that they might not, we suppose, waste the time or energies required for this important exercise. In every village were three kinds of marks set up : the butt, or level mark, in the form of a target with a bull's eye, shot at up and down, and on either side, and requiring a strong arrow with a very broad feather ; the prick, a "mark of compass," requiring strong light arrows, with feathers of moderate size ; and the rover, a mark used at various distances, therefore requiring arrows proportioned in weight and feather. Sports similar to that of the popinjay, so admirably described by Scott in 'Old Mortality,' had of course a most important effect in keeping alive the national love of the truly national weapon, and developing the matchless skill and dexterity, for which the English archers or yeomen became so renowned throughout Europe. No wonder, therefore, they gloried in the bow, as the knight gloried in his lance, and the squire in his sword. Many of the great victories that are emblazoned in our national annals, may be ascribed chiefly to the stout old English archers ; and especially the greatest of all, that of Agincourt, where we scarcely know which to admire most, the "bright consummate" military genius of Harry the Fifth, by whom that marvellous encounter was directed and stimulated ; or the heroic daring and astonishing skill of the archers, by whom virtually it was won.

One trait of our Yeoman yet remains to be spoken of. His coat and hood of green, his hunter's horn, with the baudrick of the same sylvan colour, and the Christopher of silver, that, in spite of the sumptuary laws interdicting yeomen and all beneath them from wearing ornaments of the precious metals, gleams on his breast, make us aware, even if we did not see it so stated by the poet in direct words, that he is a forester,

A forester! what delightful associations start into life at the sound of that word,—of Robin Hood and his bold outlaws, of the umbrageous greenwoods, of the red deer bounding from the dingle through the tall waving grass, and of all the pleasant sights and sounds, that give their own peculiar music and sunshine to the ancient forest life!

So much of the enjoyment of royalty and nobility was derived from the chase, and so large a part of their revenues from the preservation of game, that peculiar laws were required for the regulation and government of forests. These laws proved a sad source of oppression, when the Normans possessed themselves of the country; for they were then used as the means of lowering the native English, and making them feel that their beautiful land, whose pride was in its rich woods and meads, must no longer be theirs, but the property of strangers; who, if the dogs of the Saxon inhabitants happened to stray within the wide limits that it pleased them to mark out and call their "forests," mercilessly maimed the poor brutes for the rest of their days; or if their owners committed but a slight trespass, would hang them up on the nearest tree without judge or jury. By the great charter of King John, every freeman might have in his woods eyries of hawks, spar-hawks, falcons, eagles and herons; but it was pretty nearly the period of the Yeoman of the poet, before these rights became more than parchment ones. The bold barons, however,—who, if they practised oppression sometimes for their own ends, at least had the merit of resisting it in their kings—made genuine, at last, those and the other rights of Magna Charta, on which the stately superstructure of our national freedom has been gradually raised.

With the Knights and the Squires *their* Yeomen have also passed away, save in the North of England, where Cumberland still knows them. Such causes as the decline of the use of the bow by the English, on the introduction of gunpowder, the breaking up of the forest system, the obliteration gradually of feudal tenures, and the rise of the system of large farms—one well-to-do tenant absorbing a dozen or a score of former yeomen's holdings—fully account for the extinction of the gallant old English yeoman order, or rather its absorption into other orders, of which the chief that retains the name is the body of small freehold proprietors in the country districts.

Section III.

RELIGION.—THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

IF we regard simply the period of Chaucer, undoubtedly the most peculiar feature of the age was that one upon which we have dilated to some length, Chivalry; for, as it had not long before sprung into importance, so it did not noticeably last long after; its influences were almost as brief as they were brilliant; and but for the pages of those, who by a remarkable coincidence lived during its palmiest days, and chronicled the events and the actors of that graceful and imaginative system of bloodshedding in its own spirit—but for Froissart and Chaucer, chivalry would indeed have become to us of the present day an utterly effete thing. But there was a sweet savour of humanity beneath the scheme so elaborately developed for the destruction of all the best human interests, however little business it had there; and the historian and the poet saw it, and have in consequence taken care that the world to the end of time shall see it too. Could they have given us a finer moral?—If our common nature can be so noble, exhibit so much grace, beauty, and self-denial, under circumstances of all others the most adverse to the development of those qualities, what, let us ask ourselves, may it not become, whenever we shall surround it by influences that shall be of all others the most favourable?

Chivalry, then, was undoubtedly the peculiarly characteristic feature of the age of Edward III. and Chaucer; but if we look to a wider period,—to the middle ages generally,—the state and phenomena exhibited by religion, become of infinitely mightier importance; whilst even in connection with the poet's own era, there are circumstances in its history of much more intrinsic moment than the rise and fall of such a melancholy artificiality as that above named. Then it was that the movement commenced under Wycliffe, which was destined to break up the most imposing system of religion the world had ever witnessed; for though the actual and visible destruction did not take place until the Reformation, there can be no doubt that the foundations had been long before undermined by our early English reformers.

But destroyed though the system was, the destruction was a very different matter from that which overtook chivalry. To this hour many of its elements are active throughout society; nay, there are some who fancy they perceive the work of re-combination, to a state very nearly approaching the former state, going on throughout Europe. If this view be rejected as incorrect, as unquestionably we think it ought, we may all own, and be grateful for, the many benefits that we enjoy through the religion and the religionists of the middle ages. To them we owe the most consummate of all architectural works, even in their present state—our cathedrals; and to them we *may* owe the knowledge, how to restore these buildings to their pristine splendour; when not architecture only, but sculpture and painting also, lavished their wondrous skill upon the houses of God: we may also owe to them, if we will, the devoted hosts of worshippers who ought to be constantly seen in them, rich and poor, nobles and labourers, indiscriminately mingled together, all touchingly acknowledging a common origin and end.

To them we owe the cultivation of the love of music among the people, by familiarizing them with it through all the services, processions, and festivals of the church; and to them we may owe a better state of feeling, than that which has often allowed the musical performances of our cathedral choirs to be mutilated, on the paltriest grounds: when, too, such choirs had become rich beyond measure in the sublimest ecclesiastical *and English* music.

We owe to them our drama, which sprang out of the early church mysteries; and it would not be amiss if we were to owe to them a somewhat loftier notion than at present prevails, of the objects that theatrical representation should aim at. To them do we owe the revival of learning, and in a great degree our Grammar Schools; and to them we may owe the multitudes of students that ought to be able to flock to them, as of old, when Oxford University alone is said to have had its 30,000 scholars.

We owe to them many a noble work of charity, that still here and there stud the country over; the relics merely of a scheme of benevolence, unrivalled for magnificence and completeness; and to them, again, we may owe the right principles of dealing with the poor—principles which can make a bad system to some extent good, but the absence of which must leave the best system worthless; in a word, we owe, or may owe to them, a sympathy *with* the poor that must exhibit itself in practical efforts for them.

Lastly, we owe to them an unending debt of gratitude for their services in the cause of literature and science. For ages,

who but the monks and friars were the literary and scientific labourers of England? its poets, its historians, its philosophers, its botanists, its physicians, its educators? Where but in the libraries of the monasteries, were the collections of the accumulated wisdom of ages to be found, each day beholding additions to the store, through the labours of the scribes of the Scriptorium? And, when at last printing came to revolutionize the entire world of knowledge, who but the monks themselves, of Westminster and St. Albans, was it, that welcomed the new and glorious thing in the most cordial spirit—providing at once for the art and its disciples a home?

Let us now look at the system of which these were the better points; the worse, Chaucer will show us by and by, with an unsparing hand. In glancing over the different "rounds" of the spirit's ladder, by which the men, who in the middle ages devoted themselves to the service of religion, sought to raise themselves—

> "From this gross and visible world of dust,
> Even to the starry world,"—

four distinct stages may be perceived; the highest occupied by the monks, who were for all practical purposes as lost to their fellow-men, as if they were really what they desired to be, half absorbed into the heaven they had so nearly approached; then, duly succeeding each other downwards, the regular canons, the secular canons, and lastly the parochial clergy; whose especial duty it was, in complete opposition to that of the monks, to mingle among and instruct their fellow-men. To these must be added the friars, whose position may perhaps be best described for the present, as that of a body desiring to include all the special excellencies of all the other bodies, and who enjoyed a peculiar organization accordingly.

When the prophet Elijah retired to the wilderness, we had, say Catholic writers, the first foundation of monachism. But if we give a somewhat stricter and more just interpretation to the word, we should say that its real commencement may be referred to the earliest periods of Christianity; when many of the new converts signalized their devotion and zeal by adopting an extraordinary severity of life and religious discipline, and who became known as *ascetics*, or exercisers. The earliest and most remarkable people of the kind were certain Egyptian Jews, called the Therapeutæ, or Essenians, inhabiting the banks of the Lake Mareotis, who embraced Christianity soon after its promulgation; and, observes Gibbon, "the austere life of the Essenians, their fasts and excommunications, the community of goods, the love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the

warmth, though not the purity, of their faith, already offered a very lively image of the primitive discipline." To these succeeded the Egyptian ascetics, properly so called, who carried still further the principles of their progenitors. "They," continues the same writer, "seriously renounced the luxuries and the pleasures of the age ; abjured the use of wine, of flesh, and of marriage ; chastised their body, mortified their affections, and embraced a life of misery as the price of eternal happiness." There remained but one step more to realize monachism in all its essentials : that was the establishment of regular communities, to which those who desired to renounce the world in the body, as well as in the spirit, might repair. And in the reign of Constantine, leaders arose to induce the ascetics to take that step ; and to obtain for themselves, the title of the immediate founders of the strange and wonderful system, that was for many centuries to exercise the most important influence over the spiritual and temporal affairs of the eastern world. These leaders were Egyptians, their names Paul and Anthony ; the former, as St. Jerome explains, the author of the new mode of life, the latter its illustrator. One powerful motive with these Egyptian Christians for desiring retirement, appears to have been the persecution that had raged, previous to the accession of Constantine, against the disciples of the new faith ; but a still greater impulse existed in the earnest, intrepid character of Anthony, whose reputation was incalculably enhanced by the stories of the supernatural "visitings" to which he was subject ; although after all, it was by a disciple of Paul and Anthony, named Pachomius, and not by themselves, that the first monastery really seems to have been established. And once begun, it is surprising with what rapidity the system progressed. "The prolific colonies of monks multiplied with rapid increase in the sands of Libya, upon the rocks of Thebais, and in the cities of the Nile. To the south of Alexandria, the mountains and adjacent desert of Nubia were peopled by five thousand anachorets ; and the traveller may still investigate the ruins of fifty monasteries which were planted in that barren soil by the disciples of Anthony. In the upper Thebais, the ancient island of Tabenne was occupied by Pachomius and fourteen hundred of his brethren. That holy abbot successively founded nine monasteries of men and one of women ; and the festival of Easter sometimes collected fifty thousand religious persons, who followed his angelic rule of discipline." Gibbon refers, in the last words, to the mode in which Pachomius is said to have received his rule or code of rules for monastic life, namely, by special revelation from an angel. From Egypt, monachism quickly spread abroad over the world ; Hilarion took it to

Palestine, St. Athanasius to Rome, Eustathius to Armenia, St. Basil to Pontus, and St. Martin to Gaul, whence, lastly, Pelagius introduced it into these islands.

Omitting from our brief notices any mention of the thousand and one fantastic shapes into which monachism branched, it will be sufficient here to observe that the great body of monks ultimately acknowledged one rule, and adopted therefore one mode of life and discipline. The founder of that rule was St. Benedict, who however borrowed largely from St. Basil's earlier rule. He was born in Italy, about the year 480; and at the tender age of fourteen, hid himself in a cavern in a desert for a considerable time, where he was supplied with provisions through the care of a friend, who had to descend with them by a rope. The fame of the ascetic soon spread, and people flocked to him from all quarters. About 528 he removed to Mount Cassino; where, having converted the inhabitants from paganism, and overthrown the statue of Apollo, he founded the order bearing his name, which quickly spread all over Europe. It was introduced into England by St. Augustine and his brethren in 596, when they came to convert the Anglo-Saxons to the Christian religion. So rapidly did the order progress here in public estimation, that its revenues in the course of time exceeded the revenues of all the other monastic orders put together. All the abbeys in England prior to the Norman conquest were filled with its votaries; and, down to the Reformation, all the mitred and parliamentary abbots, excepting the prior of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, were Benedictines. The number of Benedictine monasteries in this country, as given by Tanner, was 113, with a collective revenue valued at the dissolution at 57,892*l.* 1*s.* 11*d.*; there were also 73 houses of Benedictine Nuns, with a revenue of 7,985*l.* 12*s.* 1*d.*; making in all 186 houses, with a revenue of 65,877*l.* 14*s.*

Suppose we now glance at the general tenor of a monastic day among the communities of this order.

The matin bell rings—it is two hours after midnight; and the monks rise from their beds, and put on their rough and unadorned garments, meditating the while upon their past misdeeds, and future amendment. At a given signal, all issue forth through the gate of the monastery, and proceed toward the church; pausing at the threshold to make their prayers for the excommunicated, with their heads humbly bowed towards the ground. Protracted as is the service performed in the sacred edifice, all parties are expected to share in it with the deepest sympathy, and most unflagging attention; and woe be to him whom the prior may find asleep, as he goes his

rounds through the church, with his dark-lantern and stealthy step. But even the most zealous, no doubt, experience a sense of relief, when some incident occurs to break the dreary uniformity of the proceedings. The general sins of the monks may be black enough, and the necessity of general pardon great; but it is evident how much more interest is felt when brother —— gets up, and in broken language, acknowledges to the abbot some evil desire that has just crossed his mind, and made him unmindful of the sacred duties of the place, and for which he beseeches his and God's mercy:—both are granted by the abbot. Mark too, in spite of all attempts at concealment, how, many a neck is outstretched, and how all eyes are turned brightly and inquiringly towards the new novices, who advance to lay their petition upon the altar, and who then prostrate themselves before the whole congregation, into which they thus ask to be admitted. Perhaps they are but of tender years; in that case the parents, wrapping their hands in the altar-pall, promise to leave them nothing, in order that they may afterwards have no temptation to quit the cloister and return to the world. Prime at last comes—it is six o'clock, the superior again gives the signal, and the monks leave the church for the monastery. Labour next demands attention. From prime till ten o'clock, every monk is employed in accordance with his strength and ability. Some go to the distant mill to prepare the flour—and some to the oven to bake the bread of the community; others resort to the garden, and a few to the workshop, where mechanical operations are carried on. But there is a species of work, which those who are fitted for it find so delightful as to form no inconsiderable recompense for all the enjoyments that they gave up when they quitted the great world without; that is the work of the Scriptorium; employing one, two, three, or four writers, in proportion to the wealth and rank of the abbey, and the taste and liberality of the abbot. Favoured then indeed are those chosen for the Scriptorium—and they know it. See how busily they ply the pen and the pencil. Here is one copying an old Greek classic, and looking occasionally very lovingly at another book of "Roman fame" that the abbot has just brought him to be next transcribed. What exquisite writing—how firm and bold his touch, even in the most elaborately ornamented capitals—how he pauses with head thrown back and turned aside to look at the effect! Another monk of higher ability, is engaged, heart and soul, in illuminating a manuscript that his fellow-labourer has copied. As you look at him, forget not you behold the earliest English artist, properly so called. And mark, what grace and luxuriance of fancy he has lavished upon those

descriptive borders! We will not say much for the drawing of the figures in some of his ambitious compositions; but what can be more gorgeous, and at the same time more harmonious than the colouring? Above all, look at the *sentiment* that he has infused into the face of the Virgin. Is it not indeed steeped in beauty and holiness? Ten o'clock comes. The sound of footsteps is heard; it is the monks leaving work, and coming to the library, each for a book, with which to wile away in the cloisters the next two hours before dinner; but the caligrapher and the illuminatist stir not—their work is their recreation, and they go on busier than ever. Twelve o'clock at last! they pause—shall they go to the Hall? No—they are too much interested in what they happen to have in hand to-day, to-quit the Scriptorium; so they again proceed; after the utterance, by one of them, of a pious blessing on the memory of that nobleman who appointed in some other monastery a daily provision of meat for the labourers in the literary vineyard, to prevent the necessity of their being disturbed. Well, in the absence of such a provision in *their* monastery, let us hope the abbot will do as he has done before, quietly send them something from his own table.

Little as the monks of the Scriptorium may regard the hour of refection, it is a great era in the daily life of most other inhabitants of the monastery. See these monks in the cloisters a little before the time, how evidently impatient they are getting. They have tried again and again to go on with the book, but cannot succeed, albeit it tells of all the thousand and one temptations that some very excellent saints passed safely through. They have looked upon the pleasant green sward around them, which signifies "the greenness of their virtue above others," till they have grown undeniably humble as to their practical admiration of that virtue;—on that single tree in the centre, which implies the ladder by which they aspire to celestial things, until they feel uncommonly weary, and indisposed to climb. It must be owned, that the half hour before dinner *is* a very awkward time, to say the least of it, when men have eaten nothing since the previous evening. So, if they do break the rule for implicit silence—if some idle word, or gesture, does excite laughter—or if the head and eyes will forget to seek the ground, St. Benedict himself ought to be able to make some allowance for human nature in its extremest trials. Ah, there is the bell at last! Self-denial is easy now. One might almost suppose the monks after all did not want their dinner, so circumspectly do they walk towards it. In the blandest of tones are the words Brother and Nonno (grandfather) bandied about between the youthful and the older

monks ; with the meekest reverence does the junior monk ask benediction from the senior on meeting ; or with the most polished courtesy does he rise, even after he has taken his seat, to offer it to the other, and only re-seat himself when bidden. Dinner commences. It is simple enough. Fish, vegetables, fruit ; with a pound of bread to each monk ; and three-quarters of a pint of wine to last him both for dinner and supper. Not a word is spoken. Whatever is wanted is asked for by signs. A passage from the Bible is read the while by one of the monks, who holds the office in due rotation with his fellows, for the space of a week. After dinner, or from about one to three o'clock, is the meridian, or time for sleep, unless any prefer reading ; then labour again ; then supper, consisting of a pound of bread, and the remains of the dinner wine ; then vespers, or evening service ; and lastly, to bed in the dormitory ; where they sleep in their clothes, wearing their girdles, old and young intermixed ; and where, if we may believe the satirist, the natural animal spirits of the monks, as men, will sometimes break out in irrepressible exuberance. The Frere, says Barclay, in his Ship of Fools, or

> "——Monk in his frock and cowl
> Must dance in his dorter, leaping to play the fool."

To ensure the observance of such a system of life on the part of the inhabitants of the monastery, the abbot was entrusted with the most despotic powers ; he could punish at his will and pleasure, either by simple confinement, by corporeal chastisement, or by expulsion. An amusing evidence of his supremacy, is furnished by the passage in the rule that bids the monk who may be told by his superior to do impossible things, that he is at liberty humbly to represent that they *are* impossible ; but that if that appeal fail, he is to go on trying even to overcome the impossibilities, relying upon the assistance of God in his extremity. To aid the abbot, there were numerous officers of departments appointed ; such, for instance, as the high cellarer or steward ; and there was also, in very large houses, a dean placed over every ten monks. These were all chosen by the abbot ; who was himself elected by the whole society ;—a very important fact, as showing (in the earlier and purer days of the order at least) that the abbot of a monastery, in ordinary cases, must have been not only distinguished by the qualifications of a holy life, and a prudent, thoughtful mind, as required by the rule ; but also by such personal qualities as could alone win the love and respect of his brethren, and induce them to elevate him to the abbatial chair. It appears also, that in progress of time, various accomplishments were

expected to be superadded. Thus, in the thirteenth century, the prior and convent of St. Swithin's at Winchester, recommending one of their brethren to the convent of Hyde, as a proper person to fill the abbacy then vacant, include among his other and more spiritual qualifications, his knowledge of glossing, writing, illuminating, and chanting.

There is an old story, which Walton and others have treated as authentic, to the effect that some Benedictines, near Oxford University, once let in two strangers, who sought their hospitality, and made them welcome under the belief that they were on their travels, who could amuse them over the supper table, but finding that the visitors were monks . . . turned them adrift with what the French call "injuries."

The branches of the great order to which Chaucer's Monk and Prioress belonged, were very numerous; historians have recorded the names of twenty-three, and others have been probably altogether overlooked. We shall here mention only three or four principal ones. The Cluniacs, the first offshoot from the Benedictine tree, were, it appears, Benedictines according to the *spirit* of the rule, which they thought had been too literally interpreted. But that was not the only object they had in view. Monachism, by the eleventh century, had fallen into a deplorable state, through France, England, and Spain; and it is said the religious houses were "so far from observing the rule of St. Benedict in them, that they scarce knew the name of it." The Cluniacs sprang up to redeem the religious bodies of Europe from their disgraceful state of ignorance and consequent sloth. Their virtual founder was Bernon, abbot of Gigni, in Burgundy—their nominal one, Odon, abbot of Cluny, under whose auspices the new order became formally established. An amusing writer of the 13th century, Guyot de Provins, who seems to have possessed too great a restlessness of disposition to allow him to settle any where, or to any thing; went the round of the different orders, in order to see what he thought of them, that he might thus be able to attach himself permanently to the pleasantest. Hear his report of the Cluniacs:—"When you wish to sleep, they waken you; when you wish to eat, they make you fast. The night is passed in praying in the church, the day in working, and *there is no repose but in the refectory*, and what is to be found there? Rotten eggs, beans with all their pods, [which, Du Cange says, were eaten,] and liquor fit for oxen. For the wine is so poor that one might drink of it a month without intoxication."

The Cistercians, a second great Benedictine branch, suited our minstrel monk no better. And, considering that they coveted all kinds of desolate and solitary places, it was

hardly likely that it should be otherwise. But Guyot seems to complain chiefly of their selfishness and hypocrisy. The abbot and cellarer he charges with eating and drinking of the best, and sending the worst to the refectory, for those who do the work. "I have seen," he adds, "these monks put pigsties in the churchyards, and stables for asses in the chapels. They seize the cottages of the poor, and reduce them to beggary." About 1128, and not long after its foundation on the Continent, this order was brought into England, where it obtained so much repute, while yet the first bloom of novelty was upon it, that monasteries sprang up with astonishing rapidity all over the country; until there were not less than seventy-five Cistercian abbeys, many of the first rank for size, wealth, and power; and twenty-six Cistercian nunneries; besides we know not how many petty subordinate houses, or cells. It is not unworthy of notice, that since the revolution in France, and other countries, many Roman Catholic communities have established themselves in England.

The Grandmontines, a comparatively minor branch, were Benedictines in all but this, that they made alterations or additions to the rule, in order to check the luxury and wealth and worldliness of the parent monks. To obtain the object sought, they divided their number into two bodies, one of which undertook the management of the house affairs, whilst the other was devoted to ceaseless contemplation. Guyot de Provins, while informing us what was the result of this division, gives another of his satirical, but apparently true illustrations, of the nature of the contemplations which some, at least, of the absorbed eremites revelled in. Besides their "fondness of good cheer," they were remarkable for the most ridiculous foppery. "They painted their cheeks, washed and covered up their beards at night (as women do their hair), in order that they might look handsome and glittering on the next day. They were entirely governed by the lay brothers, who got possession of their money, and with it buying the court of Rome, obtained the supervision of the order."

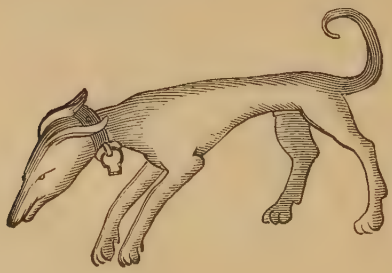
The last of the branches that we shall mention, is the Carthusian order, which was the strictest of all the religious bodies; never eating flesh, fasting one day in every week, on bread, water, and salt; and confining all its members within the boundaries of the monastery. These men, too, our recorder "knows," and their life, as might have been expected, does not tempt him. "They have," he says, "each habitations; every one is his own cook; every one eats and sleeps alone, and I do not know whether God is much delighted with all this; but this I well know, that if I were myself in Paradise, and alone there,

I should not wish to remain in it. A solitary man is always subject to bad temper. Thus I call those fools who wish me to immure myself in this way. But what I particularly dislike in the Carthusians is, that they are murderers of their sick, if these require any little extraordinary nourishment, it is peremptorily refused. I do not like religious persons who have no pity; the very quality which, I think, they especially ought to have." The Carthusians, it seems, passed the limits within which alone austerities could become popular. There were but 167 monasteries and 5 nunneries, in the whole of this order established throughout the Catholic world; of these there were in England nine of the former only: the London Charterhouse is the remnant of the most important.

But could the light-hearted, and therefore dissatisfied experimentalist of monachism, find no establishment to his taste? None where men setting out with the idea of promoting religious feeling and worship, should yet make some provision for the evident necessities of human nature? Not in the regular monasteries certainly. But the Regular Canons were established precisely to satisfy such moderate tastes and desires. They too had their rule, chiefly that of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo; but it was one that admitted of genial life and converse both at home and abroad. In a word, says Guyot, "among these one is well shod, well clothed, well fed. They go out when they like, mix with the world, and talk at table." Some of the most interesting monasteries in England belonged to this order, as Waltham Abbey, Walsingham Priory, and St. Mary Overies, Southwark,—the burial-place of Chaucer's friend and fellow-poet—Gower. This order again had all sorts of divisions; chiefly distinguished from each other by the name of the member or saint whose particular reading of the rule they thought proper to follow. Thus, some leaned to St. Nicholas, as in the monastery of Bourne, Lincolnshire; some to St. Victor, as in that of Warmesley in Herefordshire; some to St. Mary of Meretune, as in that of Beckenham in Norfolk; and some (a very numerous body) to St. Norbert, bishop of Magdeburgh; these last called themselves Premonstratensians, or White Canons, and were so popular in England as to have no less than 35 houses scattered about. The two great military bodies, the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars, who mostly followed the rule of St. Augustin or Austin, and the greater part of the charitable hospitals spread so profusely over England, and especially by its waysides, for the reception and entertainment of poor travellers and pilgrims, were connected with the order of Austin Canons. For the honour of England, we must

not forget to observe, that it produced one order of its own; the order of Gilbertine Canons; founded by Gilbert, son of Joceline of Sempringham, who was the rector of that place. We cannot, however, say much for the originality of our countryman's order, since the women that belonged to it were simply Benedictine Cistercians, and the men, Austin Canon Premonstratensians: both lived under the same roof, but separated. There were 25 Gilbertine houses in England.

In the secular canons, we find a body nearly approaching that of the ordinary parochial clergy—who indeed may be said to have sprung from them. Whenever and wherever the Christian faith was introduced into a new part of England, there was sure to be found a few devoted spirits, living a kind of monastic life, but issuing forth constantly from their seclusion, either to instruct novices, perform the great offices of the church for members, wherever two or three were gathered together, or to penetrate still further into the midst of the spiritual darkness by which they were surrounded. As these little oases in the desert were generally formed into bishoprics, and became the seats of the diocesans, such early labourers in the cause of Christ became connected with the churches or cathedrals: and have thus remained through all succeeding ages, down to our own time: when, however, whether under the name of canon or prebendary, the essential features of the office have disappeared, chiefly in consequence of the growth of the last of the four bodies we named, the Parochial Clergy; who, by the time of Chaucer, had reached pretty nearly their present eminence, as regards the number of parishes, churches, and officiating priests required for them. When Edward III. for the purposes of a tax, caused an enumeration to be prepared in 1371, there were found to be 8000 parishes: and we may observe by the way, that this tax furnishes a striking illustration of our ancestors' ignorance of "statistics." The assessment levied on each parish was 5*l.* 16*s.*, but so egregiously had the government overrated the number of English parishes, that they had at first calculated that a sum of 1*l.* 2*s.* 4*d.* from each would be sufficient: they fancied, in short, that there were some fifty thousand, instead of less than nine thousand parishes in the country.



THE MONK AND HIS GREYHOUNDS.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"An out-ridér, that lovèd venery. . . .
Greyhounds he had, as swift as fowl in flight."

[*Page* 67.

THE MONK.

HAVING shown (on the authority chiefly of the rule of "St. Maur and St. Benedict," of which Chaucer speaks below) who, according to theory, were the kind of men fitted to be superiors of monasteries, and what monks and monachism ought to be,—and what, no doubt, at their best they were—let us, while we "look on this picture," also look on "this," in marvellous contrast, by Chaucer's vigorous hand :

> "A Monk there was, a fair for the mastery ;[1]
> An out-ridér that lovèd venerie ;[2]
> A manly man, to be an abbot able.
> Full many a dainty horse had he in stable ;
> And when he rode, men might his bridle hear
> Gingle in a whistling wind so clear,
> And eke as loud, as doth the chapel bell.
> There as[3] this lord was keeper of the cell,
> The rule of sáint Maure and of saint Benedict,[4]
> Because that it was old, and somdel strait,
> This ilkè[5] monk let oldè thingès pace ;
> And held aftér the newè world the trace."[6]

As to the text :—

> "That saith, that hunters be none holy men ;
> Ne that a monk when he is cloisterless
> Is likned to a fish that's waterless ;
> This is to say, a monk out of his cloister :—
> But thilkè text held he not worth an oyster.
> And I say his opinïon was good :
> What[7] should he study, and make himselven wood,[8]

[1] *A fair for the mastery*, *i.e.* one well fitted for the management of the community to which he belongs.

[2] Hunting.

[3] Or, in other words,—there, where this lord, etc.

[4] Benedict.

[5] Same.

[6] Dr. Morris reads—"This ilke monk leet forby hem pace,

And held after the newe world the space."

The monk left the old strict Rule to take care of itself, and followed the new Order of Self-indulgence.

[7] Why. [8] Crazy, mad.

Upon a book in cloister, alway to pore?
Or swinken[1] with his handès, and labour,
As Austin bid'?[2] How shall the world be serv'd?
Let Austin have his swink to him reserv'd!
Therefore he was a prickasour[3] aright:
Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl[4] in flight:
Of pricking,[5] and of hunting for the hare
Was all his lust;[6] for no cost would he spare."

The love of hunting, which Chaucer has here described as so conspicuous a feature of his monk's character, receives numerous illustrations from the history of the religious houses of England. We find that the archdeacon of Richmond, on his initiation to the priory of Bridlington, in Yorkshire, in 1216, came attended by ninety-seven horses, twenty-one dogs, and three hawks. In 1256, Walter de Suffield, bishop of Norwich, bequeathed by will his pack of hounds to the king; whilst the abbot of Tavistock, who had also a pack, was commanded by his bishop, in 1348, to break it up. A famous hunter, contemporary with Chaucer, was William de Clowne, abbot of Leicester, who died in 1377. His reputation for skill in the sport of hare-hunting was so great, that the king himself, his son Edward, and certain noblemen, paid him an annual pension that they might hunt with him.

The cell of which this monk was "keeper," was most probably one of those offshoots from the parent houses, which, though subordinate to the latter, had their own officers and domestic management, and were sometimes very wealthy; occasionally, indeed, they grew into so much importance, as to achieve independence, and obtain the rank of a convent or priory. It is thus only that we can explain the fact of Chaucer's monk being able to have "many a dainty horse in stable," or to dress in the style that he does. No mere monk would have been allowed to keep to himself the requisite wealth; and the "keeper" or "lord" of an insignificant cell would not have had it to keep. In the Ellesmere manuscript, the passage concerning the monk's bridle

"Gingle in a whistling wind so clear,
And eke as loud as doth the chapel bell,"

is illustrated by golden bells on the bridle and trappings of the horse. The custom is supposed to have been borrowed from the knights, among whom it was made a matter of importance to have their bridles well hung with bells; and the neglecting

[1] Toil, drudge. [2] Bade. [3] A hard rider.
[4] Birds. [5] Hard riding. [6] Pleasure, delight.

to do so was looked upon as a mark of meanness or poverty. Arnaud of Marsan, an old troubadour, gives a reason for its observance :—"Nothing is more proper to inspire confidence in a knight, and terror in an enemy." Wycliffe, the contemporary, and, perhaps, friend of Chaucer, has a passage happily illustrative of the truth of Chaucer's description. In his 'Trialogus' he inveighs against the priests for their "fair horses, and jolly gay saddles and bridles ringing by the way." The remainder of Chaucer's description is as follows :—

"I saw his sleeves púrfilèd at the hand
With gris,[1] and that the finest of the land.
And, for to fasten his hood, under his chin,
He had of gold ywrought a curious pin[2];
A love-knot in the greater end there was.
His head was bald, and shone as any glass,
And eke his face, as he had been anoint.
He was a lord full fat, and in good point.
His eyen steep[3], and rolling in his head,
That steamèd as a furnace of a lead.[4]
His bootès supple, his horse in great estate;
Now certainly he was a fair prelàte.
He was not pale as a forpinèd[5] ghost.
A fat swan lov'd he best of any roast.
His palfrey was as brown as any berry."

We have already referred to the golden bells in the pictured representation of the Monk in the Ellesmere manuscript; in other respects also, that representation agrees minutely with the text, and sometimes illustrates it. The habit of the Benedictines was a black loose coat or gown of stuff, reaching down to their feet, with a cowl or hood of the same; under that another habit, white, as large as the former, made of flannel; and, lastly, boots on their legs. In the manuscript, accordingly, we have the black gown, with full sleeves, and a glimpse of the supple boots beneath. The monk has by his side two hounds, with blue collars and gilded buckles. The poet has remarked, that the sleeves of the monk's tunic were edged with fur, "the finest of the land," and doubtless as expensive as it was beautiful. One of Wolsey's ordinances for the reformation of the Benedictines, in 1519, was especially directed against this particular feature of monkish foppery.

Harry Bailly is very jocose with the monk, when the latter's turn comes to tell a tale, on his superior fitness, in many respects, for the world, rather than to be shut up in a monastery

[1] Gris, a fine sort of fur. [2] A pin made of gold.
[3] Prominent. [4] Caldron. [5] Wasted.

But the monk, says Chaucer, took all in patience, and presently begins his story, observing—

> "I will bewail, in manner of tragedy,
> The harm of them that stood in high degree,"

and then proceeds accordingly, with the most intolerable perseverance, through the histories of the respective calamities of Lucifer, Adam, Sampson, etc.; down to Crœsus, Peter of Spain, and Hugelin of Pisa; and for aught that is apparent, may still intend to go on to the very end of the pilgrimage, —for he has previously informed the pilgrims, that he has got a pretty collection of tragedies at home in his cell, just one *hundred* in number,—but that the good knight's patience fails:

> "Ho, sirè! quoth the knight, no more of this;
> That ye have said, is right enough ywis,
> And muchè more; for little heaviness
> Is right enough for muché folk, I guess;" etc.

Doubtless the pilgrims agreed with him, that "*little* heaviness" was quite "enough;" and a very different kind of story therefore follows.

With regard to Chaucer's description of the Prioress, which follows, three difficulties used to be felt by students: 1. Why did he dwell so much on her pretty manners, her deportment? 2. How could she have a Nun as a Chaplain, when the laws of the Romish Church forbid ordination to a woman? 3. Why should she have three Priests instead of one?

These difficulties were cleared away by the publication of the Survey of St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester, May 14, 1537, in the Chaucer Society's 'Essays on Chaucer,' Part III, 1876, by Dr. F. J. Furnivall. This Survey showed that Chaucer's Prioress was practically the Headmistress of a large county girls' school, where the county lords', knights', and gentlemen's daughters finished their education, and learnt their Prioress's elegant manners and love-notions. Her amanuensis or secretary was called her Chaplain; and as there were five male Chaplains or Priests in St. Mary's Abbey, to attend to the ladies, three of such Priests might well go on pilgrimage with their Abbess or or Prioress.

THE PRIORESS.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"That of her smiling was full simple and coy."

[*Page* 71.

THE PRIORESS.

"THERE was also a nun, a prioress," says Chaucer, in the commencement of his description of that delicate, tender-hearted, sentimental personage—one of the most celebrated, as it is one of the happiest, of the great poet's dramatic creations. The word 'nun' (Latin, *nonna*) is said to be derived from Egypt, and to signify a virgin; other accounts make the original meaning of the Latin word 'a penitent.' The earliest phase of female monachism appears to have been the custom common to all the religions of antiquity, of virgins dedicating themselves to the performance of divine worship; which, in reference to Christianity, had become, by the latter part of the third century, a matter of frequent occurrence; as we learn from the writings of Cyprian and Tertullian. At that period also, whilst some of the ecclesiastical or canonical virgins, as they were denominated, continued, after their vows of self-sacrifice, to reside under the parental roof, others had already adopted the example of the monks, and formed themselves into communities. From that time their history becomes a part of the general history of monachism.

Nuns, like monks, had, on their entrance into the cloister, to undergo a novitiate of from one to three years before their admission into the order, to take the three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and to receive the tonsure. In the government of these houses there were sometimes, as in the case of the Gilbertines, no less than three prioresses associated together, taking the active duties of the office in rotation. These comprised matters of a varying kind. There were the nuns' vestments, for instance, on the one hand, to be cut out, their making to be seen to, and when made, to be divided among the members; on the other, there were the chapters to be held, penances to be enjoined, licences or allowances to be granted or refused, sick to be visited and comforted. Of course respect and obedience were paid by all the nuns to their prioress; although she too had to walk circumspectly by the rules set down. She was not at liberty to sit near any man in the convent, without some discreet sister between, nor elsewhere, if it could be conveniently avoided; a cogent reason, by the way, for the presence of the nun, the prioress's chaplain, who is always by the side of the fair governor, in the pilgrimage to Canterbury. The prioress was not even permitted to leave the dormitory of the convent after dinner without the company of

some of her sisters. We must not omit to mention, that among her duties was at one period that of hearing confessions ; but this was at last done away with, for an amusing reason :—it was found there was no end to the questions which female curiosity induced them to put. We should fear Chaucer's gentle prioress could not be quite absolved from this charge:—

> " There was also a nun, a Prioress,
> That of her smiling was full simple and coy ;
> Her greatest oath n'as but by Saint Eloy ;
> And she was clept[1] Madamè Eglantine.
> Full well she sang the servicè divine,
> Entunéd in her nose full seemèly.
> And French she spake full fair and fetisly,[2]
> After the school of Stratford-attè-Bow ;
> For French of Paris was to her unknow."

The seminary which Chaucer so pleasantly satirizes for its bad French, is supposed by Mr. Warton to have been a fashionable place of instruction for nuns or novices : and the idea is not unsupported by the known facts. The ancient Benedictine nunnery of " Stratford-atte-Bow " *was* famous in Chaucer's time, and not improbably on account of its educational character. Philippe de Mohun, duchess of York, who died in 1431, bequeathed to the prioress five shillings, and to the convent twenty shillings : a slight, but sufficient testimony, perhaps, of the grateful remembrance of instruction received there.

The prioress's very pretty little oath, when she did swear—and it must be remembered that our English ladies were not at all particular in such matters, even down to the times of good Queen Bess—has excited more contention among the commentators than one would have thought such a matter deserved. Warton says that St. Loy (the form in which the word appears in all the manuscripts) means, St. Lewis : but in Sir David Lyndsay's writings St. Eloy appears as an independent personage, in connexion with horses or horsemanship :—

> " Saint Eloy, he doth stoutly stand,
> Ane new horseshoe in his hand."

And again :—

> " Some makis offering to Saint Eloy,
> That he their horse may well convoy."

Whilst, lastly, Chaucer himself has a similar allusion in the Friar's tale. Some explain St. Eloy as St. Eligius.

[1] Called. [2] Neatly.

The scrupulous nicety visible in the prioress's oath, in her singing, and in her pronunciation of the Stratford-atte-Bow French, extends to her behaviour at table, where she is a perfect example of what was good breeding in the fourteenth century :—

"At meatè well ytaught was she withal ;
She let no morsel from her lippès fall ;
Ne wet her fingers in her saucé deep.
Well could she carry a morsel, and well keep,
That no dropè ne fell upon her breast.
In courtesy was sete full much her lest.[1]
Her over-lippè wipèd she so clean,
That in her cuppè was no farthing[2] seen
Of greasè, when she dranken had her draught.
Full seemély aftér her meat she raught."[3]

And her mental characteristics and her dress are in fine harmony with her manners ;—

And sikerly[4] she was of great disport,
And full pleasánt, and amiable of port ;
And painèd her to counterfeiten cheer
Of court, and be estately of mannère,
And to be holden digne[5] of reverence.
But for to speaken of her conscïence,
She was so charitable and so pitóus,[6]
She wouldè weep if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
Of smallè houndès had she, that she fed
With roasted flesh, and milk, and wastel bread.[7]
But sore wept she, if one of them were dead ;
Or if men smote it with a yerdè[8] smart.
And all was conscïence and tender heart.
Full seemély her wimple pinchèd[9] was,
Her nosè straight ; her eyen grey as glass ;
Her mouth full small, and thereto soft and red.
But sikerly she had a fair forehéad :
It was almost a spannè broad, I trow ;
For hardily[10] she was not undergrow[11].
Full fetise[12] was her cloak, as I was 'ware.
Of small corál about her arm she bare

[1] Pleasure. [2] Not the smallest spot. [3] Reached.
[4] Certainly. [5] Worthy. [6] Piteous.
[7] A kind of cake-bread made from the finest flour.
[8] A rod.
[9] Her *wimple*, or neckerchief, was *ypinched* or plaited.
[10] To speak boldly.
[11] Of a low stature. [12] Neat.

A pair of beadès, gauded [1] all with green ;
And thereon hung a brooch of gold full sheen ;[2]
On which was first ywritten a crownèd A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia*."[3]

The same tender motto appears to be referred to in 'The Squire of Low Degree,' where we find the following passage :—

"In the midst of your shield there shall be set
A lady's head with many a fret ;
Above the head writtén shall be
A reason for the love of me ;
Both O and R shall be therein
With A and M it shall begin."

Beads thus "gauded all with green," or silver gilt, or gold, are frequently mentioned in old wills, as in that of Eleanor de Bohun, duchess of Gloucester, 1399 : "Item, I devise to Madame and mother, the Countess of Erford, a pair of paternosters of coral of fifty beads, ornamented with gardes of gold," etc. ; and in other old writers of Chaucer's period; as in the pages of Gower, etc.

Our host, Harry Bailly, is evidently much struck with the prioress, and nothing can be more gallant than his bearing towards her.

Addressing her, after the Shipman's tale, he says—

"My Lady Prioressè, by your leave,
So that I wist I should you not aggrieve—
I wouldè deemen that ye tellen should
A talè next, if so were that ye would.
Now will ye vouchèsafe, my lady dear ?"

Who could reply otherwise than pleasantly to such insinuating politeness ? "Gladly," says the amiable Prioress ; and immediately tells a tale founded on an incident peculiarly calculated to arouse her feminine sympathies—the murder of a Christian child by the Jews in a far-off country. The Ellesmere manuscript represents her thus engaged, with her right hand uplifted, as if calling the particular attention of the pilgrims, to what she was saying ; a little evidence of her habitual authority, perhaps unconsciously, breaking out ; whilst in her left are seen the beads of coral. The artist has made her belong to the Benedictine Nuns, by the dress he has given to her—a black cloak over a white tunic. He has set her on the off side of her horse.

[1] Garnished. [2] Shining—bright. [3] Love conquereth all things.

THE FRIAR.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"Of double worsted was his semi-cope,
That rounded was, as bellè out of press.

. . . A wanton and a merry."

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THE FRIAR.

PASSING over for the present, and for a reason that will be seen by-and-by, the character of the parson which Chaucer gives us, as a sample of the parochial clergy, we proceed to notice THE FRIARS, who were, at different periods, the best and the worst—the most popular and most revered, the most odious and most despised, of religious bodies.

The corruptions of the monastic life, of which we have seen a fair example in the person of Chaucer's "Monk," led to the establishment, in the thirteenth century, of a new order of religionists; who hoped to bring back to the Church of Rome the respect and affection of the people, by renouncing the wealth, the pride, the indolence, and the sensuality, that so universally characterized the existing religious bodies.

The earliest orders of mendicant friars were those established by St. Dominic de Guzman, called the Dominicans or Black Friars, in 1216, and by St. Francis of Assisi, called the Grey Friars, in 1223. Various other orders followed, which were ultimately suppressed; with the exception of the Carmelites and the Augustines. Four orders in all were thus established. Their success was extraordinary. The principles and practice of pure Christianity seemed to be once more revived. The people beheld with wonder and admiration, a body of men so devoted to their spiritual interests, as to adopt for their sake a mode of life that must necessarily be full of hardships and privations. "The friars," says Godwin, "had no magnificent palaces, like the monks—no thrones, painted windows, and stately architecture; they were for the most part wanderers on the face of the earth. In these respects they professed to act on the model of Christ and his Apostles; to take no thought for the morrow; to have no place 'where to lay their head;' and to be indebted for the necessaries of existence to the spontaneous affection and kindness of the people whose neighbourhood they chanced to frequent. . . . They exercised the occupation of beggars; and they undertook peremptorily to maintain in their sermons that Jesus Christ and his disciples demanded, and subsisted upon, the alms of their countrymen. It is not wonderful, that in the ages we are contemplating, persons holding out these professions should obtain the approbation of their contemporaries. But they did not stop here. Though beggars and wanderers on the earth, they determined to exhibit in their lives every proof of the most indefatigable

industry. 'The lazy monk' had become a term of general disapprobation and obloquy. They resolved to be in all respects the reverse of the monk. They did not hide in cloistered walls, and withdraw themselves from the inspection and comments of mankind. They were always before the public, and were constantly employed in the pious offices of counsel, comfort, admonition, preaching, and prayer. In pursuit of these objects they spared no fatigue; they hastened from place to place; and when their frames might be expected to be worn out with the length of the way, they were still fresh and alert, without repose and almost without aliment, for all the offices of disinterested toil or Christian instruction, and all the duties of men incessantly watchful for the salvation of their fellow-creatures. This was their labour, their study, their refreshment, and their joy." Lastly, may be noticed their most admirable exertions in the cause of learning. Their poverty, their hardships, and their incessant occupation, did not prevent them from mastering all the subtleties of the scholastic literature and philosophy of the time, and from acquiring a new reputation in the pursuit. The greatest intellects of the thirteenth and early part of the fourteenth centuries, were almost all mendicants. We find among them Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Albertus Magnus.

Aquinas and Scotus were the founders of various sects in theology; and for centuries their disciples continued to wrangle with each other. A few words on the essentials of their disputes, and on the characters of the two eminent men we have named, may be useful in illustrating at once the absurd uses to which, in the main, learning was devoted in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; and the zeal, knowledge, and talent, that were notwithstanding exercised on such unprofitable labours. Aquinas was by birth a nobleman; but he had scarcely reached his fifteenth year, before he became by inclination a friar, having at that early age entered upon his novitiate in a convent at Naples; and, in spite of all attempts on the part of his family to alter his views, a friar he persisted in remaining. This precocity as to the choice of a vocation, did not, at first, appear to be accompanied by a corresponding precocity of intellect. The students nick-named him, the Dumb Ox. Aquinas's teacher, however, quietly remarked, that if the ox should once begin to bellow, the world would be filled with the noise. We need not here explain in detail how completely the prophecy was fulfilled—how the title of the Dumb Ox became exchanged for that of the Angelic Doctor, or for that of the Angel of the Schools. Among the anecdotes that have been preserved of him, there are two not unworthy of

repetition, as attesting his wit, courage, and the estimation in which he was held. Pope Innocent the Fourth, on the occasion of some money being brought to him in Aquinas's presence, said, "You see that the age of the church is past, when she could say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "Yes, holy father," was the caustic reply; "and the day is also past, when she could say to the paralytic, 'Take up thy bed, and walk.'" The other story is as follows: Thomas was dining one day with King —afterwards Saint—Louis of France, when he started from a long reverie, and struck the table with violence, observing, "A decisive argument! the Manicheans could never answer it." He was reminded of the presence in which he was, and begged pardon; but the king was only anxious to have the particulars of this unanswerable argument; and called in his secretary immediately to have it taken down. Aquinas died in 1274. Of his tenets the most important was that of the supreme power of the Divine grace; and in this, and other matters of doctrine, his followers the Thomists became ranged in opposition to the Scotists, or followers of Duns Scotus; more especially upon that one which formed the peculiarly distinctive feature of the teachings of Scotus, the immaculate conception of the Virgin; which first became popular after a public disputation in Paris, in the beginning of the fourteenth century; where Duns Scotus having, as a commencement, demolished more than two hundred objections that had been put forth to his doctrine, proceeded to array a no less formidable number of direct arguments in its favour. A writer who was present says, he resolved the knottiest syllogisms of his adversaries with as much ease as Samson did the bands of Delilah. The result forms a still better evidence of the friar's subtle eloquence. The university was converted *en masse;* and then, as usual, unfortunately, with most public bodies, in most countries, and in most ages, having been themselves persuaded by reason, they thought it only necessary to persuade others by force; and so a regulation was passed which rendered it necessary for every man who desired to take a degree, to swear to his belief in the immaculate conception.

The doubting, objecting character of Scotus's mind, coupled with the terrible doubts that hang over the circumstances of his death, (he is supposed to have been buried—of course unintentionally—alive), gave rise to the following epigram:—

> "What sacred writings, or profane can show,
> All truths were, Scotus, call'd in doubt by you.
> Your fate was doubtful too: Death boasts to be
> The first that choused you with a fallacy;
> Who, lest your subtle arts your life should save
> Before he struck, secured you in the grave."

The writer might have included also in his doubts, the great doubt as to his birth-place—three kingdoms, England, Scotland, and Ireland having contended for the honour. We need only add, that as Aquinas was the glory of the Dominican order, so was Scotus of the Franciscan.

From the period when these men thus helped to raise the great brotherhood of the friars to the culminating point of influence and real splendour, it was not long before a decline took place, as a natural consequence of the fact, that a more brilliant but more delusive prosperity began to attract the eye in every direction ; here in the shape of monasteries of unusual architectural magnificence ; there in the exhibition of individual friars exercising the most important influence in the temporal affairs of the world. As by the rules of their order the mendicant friars could not receive estates, the munificence of their patrons was displayed in the erection or adornment of their conventual buildings. Their churches in particular were very fine ; and it became a custom for persons of the highest rank to be buried in them. In the noble church of the Grey Friars in London, which was finished in 1325, four queens and six hundred persons of rank were interred ; and their tombs, many of them of the most sumptuous kind, remained up to the period of the dissolution. Mendicancy had indeed become fashionable ; and the mendicants, as might be expected, grew ambitious, if they were clever and energetic ; or sensual, when they wanted the talent or inclination to seek for anything higher than personal ease and enjoyment. Chaucer's friar, whom we now introduce to our readers, is of the latter description :—

"A Frere there was, a wanton and a merry,
A limitour, a full solemnè man.
In all the orders four is none that can [1]
So much of dallïance and fair languáge.
He had ymadè many a fair marriáge
Of youngè women,[2] at his owen cost.
Unto his order he was a noble post.
Full well belov'd and familïar was he
With franklins over all in his country'.
* * * *
For he had power of confessïon
As said himself, more than a curáte,
For of his order he was licenciat.[3]
Full sweetèly heard he confessïon
And pleasant was his absolutïon.

[1] Knows.

[2] Whom he had seduced. He then provided them with small portions. —Furnivall's *Temporary Preface to Six-Text*, p. 118.

[3] That is to say, licensed to hear confession.

He was an easy man to give penánce,
There as he wist[1] to have a good pittánce;
For unto a poorè order for to give,
Is signè that a man is well yshrive;[2]
For if he gave, he durstè make avaunt
He wistè that a man was répentant.
For many a man so hard is of his heart,
He may not weepè, though him sorè smart;
Therefore, instead of weeping and prayéres,
Men may give silver to the poorè freres."

In addition to all these striking recommendations to sinners who found it easier to open their pockets than their hearts, our friar has not neglected to prepare himself for those who might not require his spiritual services.

" His tippet was aye farcèd[3] full of knives,
And pinnès, for to given fairè wives.
And certainly he had a merry note.
Well could he sing, and playen on a rote.[4]
Of yeddings[5] he bare utterly the prize.
His neck was white as is the fleur de lis.
Thereto he strong was as a champïoun.
He knewe well the tavérns in every town,
And every hostèler, or gay tapstére
Better than a lazár,[6] or a beggére,
For unto such a worthy man as he
Accorded not, as by his faculty,
To haven with such lazars ácquaintance;
It is not honest, it may not advance,[7]
For to dealén with no such pouraille,[8]
But all with rich, and sellers of vitaille:"

A man who has so many qualifications for public favour, and who can look so shrewdly after his own interests and dignity, could scarcely fail of success in any occupation, much less in that of the mendicant of the fourteenth century.

And over all, where profit should arise
Courteous he was, and lowly of servíse.

[1] There, where he knew or expected he should receive "a good pittance."

[2] Or, in other words, that he has confessed "well."

[3] Forced (or stuffed) as we still say in cookery.

[4] A musical instrument, supposed to have been similar to the modern hurdy-gurdy.

[5] The meaning of the word "yeddings" is uncertain; songs or story-telling are most probably referred to.

[6] Leper.

[7] "Honest" is here used in the sense of creditable; and "advance" in the sense of profit.

[8] Offal.

There was no man no where so virtuous.[1]
He was the best beggár in all his house ;
[And gave a certain fermè for the grant,
None of his brethèren came in his haunt.[2]]
For though a widow haddè but one shoe,
(So pleasant was his *In principio*)[3]
Yet would he have a farthing ere he went.
His purchasè was better than his rent.
And rage he could, and playè as a whelp ;
In lovèdays, there could be muchel help.
For there was he not like a cloisterer,
With threadbare copè, as a poor scholár.
But he was like a master or a pope.
Of double worsted was his semicope,[4]
That round was—as a bellè—out of press.
Somewhat he lisped for his wantonness,
To make his English sweet upon his tongue ;
And in his harping, when that he had sung,
His eyen twinkled in his head aright,
As do the starrès in the frosty night."

Was there ever a more happy picture of one of the best of boon companions? The very genuineness of his enjoyment makes one half in love with him. It is but too true, however, that we cannot, from this description, think very highly of the worthy friar's piety, Christian zeal, or power of self-denial, which the *un-fashionable* church reformers of the day (Chaucer and Wycliffe among the number) held to be indispensable to even a decent observance of the duties of his calling. And so, whilst the poet silently and indirectly, but surely, attacked both monks and friars by contrasting his exemplars of each class with the "poorè parson," Wycliffe made the country ring again with his unsparing and almost indiscriminating invectives of the entire body of religionists of all kinds. In one of his works, he divided this body into twelve classes ; beginning with the pope and ending with the mendicant friars ; all of whom he denounces as anti-Christs and the proctors of satan. Gradually the friars became even more odious, perhaps, than the monks had ever

[1] Active, indefatigable.

[2] That is to say, he farmed or paid a certain rent for the right of begging "in his haunt," to which consequently none of his "brethèren" were allowed to come. These two lines are not in some MSS.

[3] *In the beginning.* This refers to the beginning of St. John's Gospel. Tyndale, p. 62, "Answer to Sir T. More," 1530, Parker Society's reprint, says, "Such is the limiter's saying of *In principio erat verbum*, from house to house.—Furnivall's *Temporary Preface to his Six-Text* Chaucer, p. 93.

[4] Short cloak, or cape.

been, as they were more meddling and personally intrusive ; and their fate excited the less regret, at the common ruin which awaited their establishments, at the dissolution of monasteries the sixteenth century.

The friar is a "limitour," which Mr. Tyrrwhitt defines as one licensed to beg within a certain district ; and Junius, who gives a wider meaning to the term, as one who discharged his office generally within a specified district. These definitions most probably point nearly to the truth ; for, as Dr. Jamieson has observed, in the 'Vision of Piers Ploughman,' the "limitour" appears as a confessor, who, by virtue of episcopal letters, although he had no parochial charge, was authorised to hear confession and grant absolution within a certain district. The love-day, on which the friar appears to have been in much request, was supposed by the commentators of Chaucer to have been originally a day appointed for the amicable settlement of differences ; on which, when the business of the day was concluded, a feast is given to the arbitrators. But how is it they did not in connexion with the love-days, mention the Agapæ, or meetings, as the word signifies, of love and charity, of the early believers in Christianity, from which there seems every probability the love-days must have sprung ? At these meetings, a common table was provided by those who were able to give ; and the entertainment was concluded by the holy kiss. They took place on occasion of marriage, martyr-festivals, and funerals. Much scandal was excited by the love-feasts at certain periods of their history ; and in the fourth century they were forbidden by the Council of Laodicea. But they existed still, though forbidden ; and appear to have been improved, and a new purpose added to them ; in strict harmony, however, with their original object, that of setting apart the love-feast day as one especially devoted to the settlement of differences, by which love and charity among Christians were necessarily much promoted. Such, it appears to us, was the origin of the love-day ; which gradually degenerated into what was little better than a mere feast characterised by more than ordinary license and riot. Thus, in 'Piers Ploughman,' the author, whilst inveighing against the luxury and amusement of the ecclesiastics, does not forget the love-day. He says :—

> "And now is Religion a rider, a roamer by the street,
> A leader of love-dayes, and a loud beggar,
> A pricker on a palfrey," etc.

THE SUMPNOUR.

As appendages to the ecclesiastical system, we may next notice the Sumpnour and the Pardoner—two important personages in the management of ecclesiastical affairs during the middle ages, but now so completely fallen into oblivion, that their very names will doubtless appear strange to many of our readers. Both these characters show very strongly the bent of Chaucer's mind during an eventful period of church history. The bold exactions of which the first was the instrument, and the impudent cheats put upon the people by the other, had no doubt made them generally obnoxious; but still there was wanted a popular concentration of the popular idea to do them full justice; and this Chaucer furnished in the two masterly portraits before us. The one that will at present engage our attention is the Sumpnour, or Summoner—an officer employed to summon delinquents to the ecclesiastical courts, now known as an apparitor. In the 'Frere's Tale,' we have a complete view of the position and duties of this individual, from which it appears, that it was his business to seek out cases for the archdeacons to punish; cases of witchcraft,

> "Of defamation and avouterie,[1]
> Of Churchè-revès,[2] and of testaments,
> Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments,
> Of usur', and of simony also,
> But certes, lechers did he greatest woe."

Offenders of the latter description appear to have been the chief objects of his search; and he employed spies to inform him as to who were wealthy, and to draw those into temptation whom it "availed" to punish. This brief account will serve to make clearer one or two passages in the following description:—

> "A Sumpnour was there with us in that place,
> That had a fire-red cherubinnès face;
> For saucèfleme[3] he was, with eyen narrow,
> * * * * * *
> With scallèd[4] browès black, and pillèd[5] beard
> Of his viságe childrén were sore afeard.

[1] Adultery. [2] Churchwardens.

[3] In the 'Thousand Notable Things,' a prescription is given for "a sausfleame, or red pimpled face." Two of the ingredients are quicksilver and brimstone. Saucefleme is *salsa phlegma*, salt phlegm.

[4] Scurfy. [5] Bald, or scanty.

THE SUMMONER.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"That had a fire-red cherubinnès face. . .

A garland had he set upon his head,
As great as it were for an alè-stake ; [sign]
A buckler had he made him of a cake."

There n'as quicksílver, litarge, ne brimstóne,
Boras, ceruse, ne oil of tartar none,
Ne ointèment that wouldè cleanse and bite,
That him might helpen of his whelkès[1] white,
Ne of the knobbès sitting on his cheeks.
Well lov'd he garlic, onïons, and leeks;
And for to drinkè strong wine red as blood.
Then would he speak and cry as he were wood.[2]
And when that he well drunken had the wine,
Then would he speaken no word but Latíne.
A fewè termès had[3] he, two or three
That he had learnèd out of some decree:
No wonder is,—he heard it all the day.
And eke ye knowen well, how that a jay
Can clepen[4] 'Watte!' as well as can the pope.
But whoso would in other thing him grope,[5]
Then had he spent all his philosophy;
Ay, *Questio quid juris*, would he cry.

* * * *

Full privily a finch eke could he pull.[6]
And if he found owhere[7] a good felláw,
He wouldè teachen him to have none awe
In such a case of th' archèdeacon's curse;
But if[8] a mannè's soul were in his purse,
For in his purse he should ypunish'd be:
Purse is the archèdeacon's hell, quoth he.—
But well I wot he lyeth right in deed;
Of cursing ought each guilty man to dread:
For curse will slay right as assoiling[9] saveth:
And also 'ware him of a *significavit*.[10]
In danger had he at his owen guise
The youngè girlès of the diocise;[11]

[1] In the work before mentioned we find it also stated that oil of tartar "will take away clean all spots, freckles, and filthy *wheales*." This last word means, we presume, the same as whelkes, a corrupt breaking out on the face.

[2] Wild or mad. [3] Knew. [4] Call. [5] Pry into, test.

[6] Or, as a modern gambler would say, pluck a pigeon.

[7] Anywhere. [8] *But if*,—except.

[9] Absolving.

[10] "This is a writ which issues out of the Chancery, upon a certificate given by the ordinary of a man that stands obstinately excommunicate by the space of forty days, for the laying him up in prison without trial or mainprize, until he submit himself to the authority of the church: and it is so called because *significavit* is an emphatical word in it."—*Blount's Law Dictionary*.

[11] Girles may mean persons of both sexes. By having them in danger is meant that they were within the control of his office.

And knew their counsel, and was of their rede.[1]
A garland had he set upon his head;
As great as it were for an alèstake.[2]
A buckler had he made him of a cake."

We wonder whether Shakspere had Chaucer's Sumpnour in his eye, when he makes Fluellen thus describe to Henry V. "one Bardolph, if your majesty know the man: his face is all bubukles and whelks, and knobs, and flames of fire." The description at all events reminds one instantly of that of the elder poet. The last is "humorously drawn," says Warton, "as counteracting his profession by his example: he is libidinous and voluptuous, and his rosy countenance belies his occupation." He then adds, "that it is an indirect satire on the ecclesiastical proceedings of those times." Even before the age of the author of the 'Canterbury Tales,' the Sumpnour appears to have distinguished himself by the contrast which Warton points out, and to have brought down upon him the indignation of equally zealous but less powerful satirists. We find in Piers Ploughman's 'Vision,' the "somoners and their lemmans" marked out for especial reprobation, in his indignant censures of the conduct of those then connected with the church. And after the period of Chaucer he enjoyed no greater amount of favour from the poets; for Milton calls him, and the whole race of such persons, "a hell-pestering rabble."

His affectation of law terms, picked up from the decrees and pleadings which he had overheard during his attendance in court—his display of learning, when, having "well-drunken" of the wine, he will speak nothing but the Latin which the law terms have taught him—above all, his flights for refuge to the one parrot cry, "Questio quid juris," are highly humorous and amusing. Mr. Tyrrwhitt's explanation of the origin of this phrase, which the Sumpnour finds so useful when he hath "spent all his philosophy," is, "that this kind of question occurs frequently in Ralph de Hengham (a law writer and chief justice of the Court of King's Bench, in the time of Edward I.); after having stated a case, he adds, 'Quid juris?'" —what is the law? and then proceeds to give the answer.

Chaucer has not described the Sumpnour's dress. About the sixteenth century, the colour of the garb of ecclesiastical attendants generally, appears to have been tawny. In Shakspere's 'Henry VI.,' the Bishop of Winchester is said to be attended by men in tawny coats; and in other passages

[1] *And was of their rede, i.e.* he advised with them.

[2] A stake set up before an alehouse as a sign, and which, it appears, was sometimes decorated with a garland. Note the garland in the cut.

of dramatic authors we have the Sumpnour more particularly referred to by that mark. Mr. Steevens quotes the following passage :—"Though I was never a tawny coat, I have played the summoner's part." In the Ellesmere manuscript we have an entirely different garb. There the Sumpnour wears a jacket or surcoat of blue, and pantaloons of scarlet. He has the garland on his head ; worn, we may imagine, to set off the beauty of the face beneath, which is faithfully delineated from the poet's verses ; the buckler, apparently made of a cake, by his side ; and a sealed letter or summons in his hand.

We conclude with noticing that the Friars and Sumpnours of the fourteenth century do not appear to have looked on each other with very favourable feelings. During the pilgrimage we learn that the

> "noble Frere
> He made alway a manner louring cheer
> Upon the Sumpnour ;"

and as soon as the opportunity offers, says,

> "If it like to this company,
> I will you of a Sumpnour tell a game ;
> Parde, ye may well knowen by the name,
> That of a Sumpnour may no good be said."

He does accordingly tell a tale which affects the Sumpnour so strongly,

> "That like an aspen-leaf he quoke for ire."

The latter, however, takes his revenge in the story he tells in return ; and as a specimen of the broad humour and plain speaking of our forefathers in these matters, we may be excused, perhaps, for presenting a sample of the Sumpnour's quality from the prologue to his story, in which he gives the Friar a foretaste of what is to come. He says to the company

> "Ye have often time heard tell,
> How that a Frerè ravish'd was to hell,
> In spirit onès by a visioun ;
> And as an angel led him up and down,
> To showen him the painès that there were,
> In all the placè saw he not a Frere.
> Of other folk, he saw enough in woe
> Untó this angel spoke this Frerè tho :[1]

[1] Then.

Now, sir, quoth he, have Frerès such a grace
That none of them shall comen in this place ?
Yes, quoth this angel, many a millïoun ;
And unto Sathanas he led him down.
And now, hath Sathanas, said he, a tail
Broader than of a carrick[1] is the sail ;
Hold up thy tail, thou Sathanas, quoth he."

The angel is obeyed, and immediately,

"Right so as bees swarming out of a hive"

issue—

"A twenty thousand Frerès on a route,[2]
And throughout hellè swarmed all about."

Upon the whole, the squabbles of the Friar and the Sumpnour formed a very "pretty quarrel," and were, no doubt, greatly enjoyed by their fellow-travellers. In the Tale of *Beryn*, in Urry's Chaucer, and in Dr. Furnivall's separate edition for the Chaucer Society, this quarrelis referred to ; and the Clerk tells the Summoner that the Friar is justified in knowing of evil things—falsehood, vice, and theft—as he is then able to avoid them ; and therefore the Summoner ought not to be angry with the Friar for his Tale, l. 251–267.

[1] A large ship. [2] *On a route*, in a company.

THE PARDONER.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"A vernicle had he sowèd on his cap.
His wallet lay before him in his lap,
Bret-full of pardons, come from Rome all hot."

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THE PARDONER.

ITH the Sumpnour, continues the poet,

"Rode a gentle Pardonere
Of Rounceval, his friend and his compeer,
That straight was comen from the court of Romè.
Full loud he sang, 'Come hither, love, to me.'
This Sumpnour bare to him a stiff burdoún,[1]
Was never trump of half so great a soun'.
This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,
But smooth it hung, as doth a strike of flax;
By ounces hung his lockès that he had,
And therewith he his shoulders oversprad;
Full thin it lay, by culpons,[2] one and one;
But hood, for jollity, ne wear'd he none;
For it was trussèd up in his wallét.
Him thought he rode all of the newè get;[3]
Dishevel, save his cap, he rode all bare.
Such glaring eyen had he as a hare.
A vernicle[4] had he sew'd upon his cap.
His wallet lay before him in his lap,
Bret-full[5] of pardon come from Rome all hot.
A voice he had as small as any goat.
No beard ne had he, ne nevér should have,
As smooth it was as it were late yshave.
* * * *

But of his craft, from Berwick unto Ware
Ne was there such another Pardonere
For in his mail he had a pillowbere,[6]
Which that he saidè, was Our Lady's veil.
He said he had a gobbet[7] of the sail
That Saïnt Peter haddè when he went
Upon the sea, till Jesus Christ him hent.[8]
He had a cross of laton,[9] full of stones;
And in a glass he haddè piggès' bones.
But with these relics, whennè that he found
A poorè parson dwelling upon lond;
Upon a day he got him more monéy
Then that the parson got in moneths tway.

[1] Or, sang a base accompaniment. [2] Shreds.
[3] That is to say, quite in the fashionable manner.
[4] Veronica, see p. 90. [5] Cram-full. [6] The covering of a pillow.
[7] Morsel. [8] Took hold of.
[9] A mixed metal, somewhat resembling brass.

And thus with feignèd flattery and japes,[1]
He made the parson and the people his apes.
But truëly to tellen at the last,
He was in church a noble ecclesiast.
Well could he read a lesson or a story,
But alderbest[2] he sang an offertory ;[3]
For well he wistè, when that song was sung,
He mustè preach, and well afile[4] his tongue,
To winnè silver, as he right well could ;
Therefore he sang full merrily and loud."

Such is the general description of the Pardoner in the prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales ;' but in the Tales themselves we have a still more detailed picture ; painted by that most amusing and impudent cheat himself, and in the richest style of humorous satire. Before we proceed any further, however, it may be as well to notice a few particulars concerning the origin and history of the "craft" of which the individual in question is so brilliant an exemplar. In the early ages of the Roman Catholic Church, contrite sinners, after confession, not unfrequently received severe and public punishment, in addition to the pains of purgatory after death to which their sin would subject them. Occasionally, however, an *indulgence* was granted by the bishops, mitigating the severity or duration of both kinds of punishment, or commuting them for works of charity or pious exercise. Such was the origin of indulgences. In progress of time, indulgences were granted on a more wholesale scale ; as a temptation to wealthy persons to assist in the erection of some great monastery or cathedral, or for the attainment of other important objects desired by the church. The first great abuse of this power, appears to have been produced by its too frequent use by the bishops, and by its arrogation on the part of simple priests : the result of which was a most injurious facility of obtaining remission of punishment. The early fathers of the church, St. Cyprian and Tertullian, for instance, complain of this state of things. A worse, however, was to follow. Indulgences not only were granted without reference to their original purpose, of merely commuting a specific punishment for a specific sin, and in an appropriate manner, after a consideration of all the circumstances—but they became matters of sale ! And although the traffic in them had been severely reprobated by many councils, and although the very bull by which they were granted contained a clause

[1] Tricks. [2] Best of all.
[3] The anthem or service chanted during the offering, and forming a part of the Mass. [4] File, sharpen, polish.

stating that if anything were given as the price of the indulgence, the indulgence itself became null, yet it is well known that, in the words of Godwin, "the sale of indulgences, pardons, and dispensations, the occasions for which were continually multiplied, brought a boundless revenue to the court of Rome."[1] By the time of Chaucer and Wycliffe, the evil had become an intolerable disgrace to the church in the eyes of all its enlightened and pious friends; consequently we find both those admirable reformers holding up the Pardoners, as the retailers of indulgences were called, to the scorn and contempt of their readers. The poet, in particular, has drawn their character so carefully; has detailed all the modes of imposition adopted by them with so keen a sarcasm; that there wanted but the art of printing for its dissemination, to have saved our later writers and preachers a great deal of trouble. The Pardoner thus addresses the other Pilgrims:—

"Lordings, quod he, in churchè when I preach,
I painè me[2] to have a haughty speech,
And ring it out as loud as doth a bell,
For I can all by rotè that I tell.
My theme is alway one, and ever was:
Radix malorum est cupiditas.[3]
First I pronouncè whennès[4] that I come;
And then my bullès show I all and some;
Our liegè lordès seal on my patént,
That show I first, my body to warrént;
That no man be so hardy, priest, ne clerk
Me to disturb of Christè's holy work.

* * * *

Then have I in latón a shoulder bone,
Which that was of a holy Jewès sheep.
Good men, say I, take of my wordés keep;[5]
If that this bone be wash'd in any well,
If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxé swell,
That any worm hath eat, or worm ystung,
Take water of that well and wash his tongue,
And it is whole anon.

* * * *

If that the good man that the beastè oweth,[6]
Will every week, ere that the cock him croweth,
Fasting, drinken of this well a draught,
As thilkè holy Jew our elders taught;

[1] 'Life of Chaucer,' vol. ii., p. 114.
[2] I paine me, *i.e.* I take pains.
[3] Cupidity is the root of all evil.
[4] Whence.
[5] Take note, bear in mind.
[6] Owneth.

His beastès and his store shall multiply:
And, sirs, also, it healeth jealousy.
* * * * *
Here is a mitain[1] eke, that ye may see
He that his handè put in this mitain,
He shall have multiplying of his grain
When he hath sowen, be it wheat or oats;
So that he offer pence, or ellès groats."

The veneration for the relics of holy men, martyrs, etc., sprang up during the first ages of the Christian Church; but their use, which, it appears from Chaucer, had grown in the fourteenth century into so vulgar a superstition, and afforded such a harvest to imposture, may be dated probably from about the end of the sixth century only. At that period Gregory I. was pope, who displayed a high sense of the virtue inherent in such things. There is a letter of his to the Empress Constantina, in answer to her request for a part of the body of St. Paul, which he declines, on the ground that it was not the custom of the Romans, or in general of the Christians of the West, to touch, much less to remove, the bodies of saints; but that they put a piece of linen, called Brandeum, near them, which is afterwards withdrawn, and treasured up with due veneration in some new church; and as many miracles are wrought by it, as if the bodies themselves were there. In order, however, not to wholly disappoint the empress, the Pope added, he would send her some filings of the chains which St. Paul wore on his neck and hands. From that time the veneration for relics increased, till it became, as we have said, during the middle ages, a vulgar superstition, on which impostors throve:—

"By this gaude have I wonnè year by year,
A hundred marks since I was Pardoner,"

says the rogue of the 'Canterbury Tales.'

The poet tells us he is "of Rounceval;" the chapel, we presume, built over the tomb of Roland, nephew to Charlemagne, at the well-known place in Spain where he was killed, and to which chapel there was in the middle ages great resort of pilgrims; but his most recent visit has been to Rome; and hence the token he carries in his hat—the vernicle—an ornament exhibiting a miniature copy of the picture of Christ, said to have been imprinted on a handkerchief, under the following miraculous circumstances:—"As our Saviour was carrying the cross, a maid, named Veronica, presented him with a handkerchief;

[1] Mitten.

with which he wiped the blood and sweat from his face, and then gave it back to her. On looking at the handkerchief, the pious and humane possessor found imprinted on it in colours a portrait of Christ; thus originated the Sudarium or holy kerchief —the Veronica—and, by corruption, the vernicle."

The Pardoner had certainly one merit—candour;—that is to say, when he was not professionally engaged. As he has told the pilgrims of his gains, so he also tells them of his mode of silencing all opposition to his trade, or at least of punishing it, by attacking the offender from the pulpit, which it appears was frequently if not generally open to him. "For," he says,—

> "— when I dare not other ways debate,
> Then will I sting him with my tonguè smart
> In preaching, so that he shall not astarte[1]
> To be defamèd falsely, if that he
> Hath trespass'd to my brethren or to me.
> For though I tellè not his proper name,
> Men shall well knowen that it is the same,
> By signès, and by other circumstánces:
> Thus quit I folk that do us displeasances.
> Thus spit I out my venom under hue
> Of holiness, to seem holy and true.
> But shortly mine intent I will devise,
> I preachè no thing but of covetise.
> Therefore my theme is yet, and ever was,
> *Radix malorum est cupiditas.*"

Mr. Todd says, "However lightly the character of the Pardoner may be estimated, I must not omit to remark, that the tale which the poet occasions him to recite, (the awful story of 'Death and the Three Riotours') is extremely interesting in its dramatic and moral effect."[2] This observation, whether so intended or not, appears calculated to convey an erroneous impression; namely, that there is a want of fitness between the tale and its relater, which is perhaps about the last fault that so great an artist as Chaucer would have committed. Knowing the Pardoner's character and tastes, the pilgrims cry out, immediately that he is about to commence his tale,

> "Nay, let him tell us of no ribaldry.
> Tell us some moral thing, that we may learn."

To which the Pardoner replies—

> "For though myself be a full vicious man,
> A moral tale yet I you tellen can,
> Which I am wont to preachen for to win;"

[1] Escape. [2] 'Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer,' p. 263.

and which he "can by rote," as he has before indirectly stated. The tale is told; and at its conclusion, the Pardoner, with consummate assurance and irresistible humour, says to the pilgrims,—

> "But, sirs, one word forgot I in my tale—
> I have relícs and pardon in my mail,
> As fair as any man in Engè-land,
> Which were me given by the Popè's hand.
> If any of you will of devotïon
> Offer, and have mine absolutïon,
> Come forth anon, and kneeleth here adown,
> And ye shall have here my pardoún.
> Or ellès taketh pardon, as ye wend
> All new and fresh, at every townès end;
> So that ye offer alway new and new,
> Nobles or pence, which that be good and true.
> It is an honour to every that is here,
> That ye may have a súffisant Pardonere,
> To assoilen[1] you in country as ye ride
> For ádventurès which that may betide."

And to make the whole thing richer and more ridiculous, he adds,—

> "I redè that our *hostè* shall begin,
> For he is most envelopèd in sin.
> Come forth, sir host, and offer first anon,
> And thou shalt kiss the relics every one,
> Yea, for a groat; unbuckle anon thy purse."

There is a laugh at the host's expense; quickly, however, returned upon the Pardoner, by Harry Bailly's more humorous than delicate retort. The worthy knight interferes, and checks the rising anger; so the two "kiss,"

> '——— and riden forth their way.'

The Ellesmere manuscript shows the long yellow hair spread in parted locks upon the Pardoner's shoulders, his surcoat of scarlet trimmed with white, and his scarlet cap with the *vernicle* in front. His stockings are blue. In his hand he carries the cross of laton, a kind of brass or mixed metal, coloured at the points, yellow, red, and blue. The white lambskin wallet, bearing such precious relics, rests on the horse's back, and is carefully guarded by strings, which the Pardoner has hung round his

[1] Absolve.

neck. We conclude by observing that to the Pardoner's class we are in no trifling degree indebted for the acceleration, at least, of the Reformation. It was the retailing of indulgences by Tetzel, a Dominican friar, in Wittenberg, in 1517, that brought Luther first before the world, in opposition not only to their sale but to their general purpose and tendency ; and so prepared his mind for the mightier warfare he was to wage for the abolition throughout Europe of abuses of which Pardoners formed but an inconsiderable portion ; and in which his success was to be for ever afterwards referred to as one of the greatest epochs in the history of intellectual independence.

Wyclif's English Works in the Early English Text Society (ed. F. D. Matthew), Mr. Thos. Arnold's edition of Wyclif's Sermons, etc., for the Clarendon Press, the Reformer's Latin Works published by the Wyclif Society, as well as the Satirical Poems in the Rolls Series, the Camden, Percy and Ballad Societies, may be referred to as illustrating the abuses of the Pardoners, Friars, etc., in England.

The further adventures of Chaucer's Pardoner, in the Chequers Inn, at Canterbury, are amusingly told in the Prologue to the Tale of *Beryn*, in Urry's Chaucer, and Dr. Furnivall's edition for the Chaucer Society.

THE PARSON.

IF we now glance back for a moment over the characters so graphically portrayed by our poet—the luxurious monk, the delicate and sentimental prioress, the licentious vagabond friar, and that pair of inimitable scoundrels, the Sumpnour and the Pardoner; if at the same time we consider what must have been the state of the ecclesiastical system of England, when these could be presented as its chief exemplars, we shall be prepared, nay, we must half anticipate, such a statement as that of Hallam, that "the greater part of literature in the middle ages may be considered as artillery levelled against the clergy. I do not," he subjoins, "say against the Church, which might imply a doctrinal opposition by no means universal. But if there is one theme upon which the most heretical writers are united, it is ecclesiastical corruption. Divided among themselves, the secular clergy detested the regular; the regular monks satirized the mendicant friars; who in their turn, after exposing both to the ill-will of the people, incurred a double portion of it themselves. In this most important respect, therefore, the influence of mediæval literature was powerful towards change. But it rather loosened the associations of ancient prejudice, and prepared mankind for revolutions of speculative opinion, than brought them forward." The greatest beyond comparison of the writers of this "mediæval literature,"—the boldest in courage, and the most powerful and searching in intellect of the wielders of this "artillery" that was daily, though imperceptibly, weakening the whole fabric of clerical abuse,—was also the man who, not willing to confine his labours to the removal of "ancient prejudices," set up for the guidance of his countrymen, a light, that did not shine merely to bring *them* forward, but that remains to this day, so far in advance of all that we have yet achieved, that it may serve, if we will, to bring forward ourselves, and our children, and our children's children, to the remotest generations. Yet that man, strange and utterly unaccountable as, to us, appears the fact, does the eminent historian from whom we have transcribed the preceding passage, pass over, in his work, with less notice than is vouchsafed to many of the thousand and one personages who have strutted and fretted their hour upon the stage, and then are heard of no more,—except in such works as that we have just referred to. It is indeed, we repeat, a strange, and to us utterly unaccountable

THE PARSON.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"(Full) rich he was of holy thought and work.

Christès love and his apostles twelve,
He taught; and first he followed it himselve."

circumstance, that in a History of Literature, devoted to a period of some three centuries, the greatest, with but one or two exceptions, of all the men therein dealt with, and if we consider all the circumstances of his position as regards England merely, we might almost say, the greatest without any exception,—Chaucer,—is passed over in a few lines. Surely this is a greater curiosity of literature, than any contained in Mr. D'Israeli's amusing work.

Yes, Chaucer was not content with pulling down : he knew there must be also building up ; that the two processes should go on together, and with something like an equality of forces ; and he *has* built up an edifice, upon which admiration, and wonder, and deep reverence may exhaust themselves, in the vain hope of satisfying the eternal demand it makes upon them. Yet it is but a composition of some fifty or sixty lines of which we thus speak ; the character to which they are devoted is but that of a "poore parson of a town ;"[1] but such a character as, without irreverence be it said, the inspired pages of the New Testament can alone parallel and surpass ; from which source, indeed, Chaucer has evidently borrowed the strength that makes him something more than human. It is as if the poet, with his whole moral being filled with the Divine truths of the Sermon on the Mount, and his whole intellectual being raised to the highest pitch by the consciousness that even they were to derive a kind of new force from his writings, had suddenly, with the loftiest dramatic skill, personified them into a shape that was to live, and move, and breathe before men's eyes, from that time forward, evermore. Let not our readers, in consequence of these remarks, look for something full of brilliancy and excitement ;—they will not even find the ordinary graces of poetical style. What we trust they will agree with us in thinking they *do* find, is, in brief, one of the noblest of earthly characters, in the simplest, homeliest of shapes. Behold, then, the poore Parson !—

> "A good man was there of religïoun,
> Which was a poorè Parson of a town :
> But rich he was of holy thought and work.
> He was also a learnèd man, a Clerk,
> That Christè's gospel gladly wouldè preach.
> His parishens[2] devoutly would he teach.
> Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
> And in adversity full patïent :
> And such he was yprovèd often sithes,[3]
> Full loth were him to cursen for his tithes :

[1] The "town" of Chaucer's day may be described as the village of ours.

[2] Parishioners. [3] Times.

But rather would he given, out of doubt,
Unto his poorè parishens about
Of his off'rìng, and eke of his substánce.
He could in little thing have súffisance.
Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,
But he ne leftè not for rain nor thunder,
In sickness, ne in mischief[1] to visíte
The farthest in his parish, much and lite,[2]
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,[3]
That first he wrought, and after that he taught.
Out of the Gospel he the wordès caught,
And this figúre he added yet thereto :—
That if gold rustè, what should iron do?
* * * *
He settè not his benefice to hire,
And left his sheep encumber'd in the mire,
And ran to Londón, unto Saintè Poul's,
To seeken him a chantèry for souls,
Or with a brotherhood to be withhold ;
But dwelt at home, and keptè well his fold.
So that the wolf ne made it not miscarry :
He was a shepherd, and no mercenary.
And though he holy were, and virtuous,
He was to sinful men nought díspitous ;[4]
Ne of his speechè dangerous,[5] ne digne,[6]
But in his teaching díscreet and benign.
To drawen folk to Heaven by cleanliness,[7]
By good ensample was his business.
But[8] it were any person obstinate,
What so he were of high or low estate,
Him would be snibben[9] sharply for the nonès.[10]
A better priest I trow there no where none is.
He waited after no pomp, ne reverence,
Ne makèd him a spicèd conscïence ;
But Christè's lore, and his Apostles twelve,
He taught, and first he followed it himselve."

An interesting question here naturally suggests itself. Was Chaucer as much alone in the desire for this spiritual elevation, as he undoubtedly was in the power of developing it? Or was he but one, although the most illustrious, of a band of religious reformers, who, as before, sprang out of the bosom of the Catholic Church to denounce its manifold errors and corruptions?

[1] Misfortune. [2] *Much and lite*—rich and poor. [3] Gave. [4] Inexorable, pitiless. [5] Sparing, as fearful. [6] Disdainful. [7] Purity. [8] Except. [9] Snub—Rebuke. [10] Nonce, occasion.

Wycliffe and his disciples at once occur to the recollection in answer. Hallam observes, in his History of Literature,

"It may be said in general, that three distinct currents of religious opinions are discernible, on this side of the Alps, in the first part of the fifteenth century. The high pretensions of the Church of Rome to a sort of moral, as well as theological infallibility, and to a paramount authority even in temporal affairs, when she should think fit to interfere with them, were maintained by a great body in the monastic and mendicant orders, and still exercised probably a considerable influence over the people in most parts of Europe. The councils of Constance and Basle, and the contentions of Gallican and German churches against the encroachments of the holy see had raised up a strong adverse party, supported occasionally by the government, and more uniformly by the temporal lawyers and other educated laymen. It derived, however, its greatest force from a number of sincere and earnest persons, who set themselves against the gross vices of the time, and the abuses grown up in the church through self-interest or connivance. They were disgusted, also, at the scholastic systems, which had turned religion into a matter of subtle dispute, while they laboured to found it on devotional feeling and contemplative love. The mystical theology, which, from seeking the illuminating influence and piercing love of the Deity, often proceeded onward to visions of complete absorption in his essence, till that itself was lost, as in the East, from which this system sprang, in an annihilating pantheism, had never wanted, and can never want, its disciples. A third religious party consisted of the avowed or concealed heretics, some disciples of the older sectaries, some of Wycliffe or Huss, resembling the school of Gerson and Gerard Groot in their earnest piety, but drawing a more decided line of separation between themselves and the ruling power, and ripe for a more complete reformation than the others were inclined to desire."

An amusing book might be written on poets' opinions of each other, and certainly, among its chapters, none would be more amusing than the opinions of John Dryden upon Geoffrey Chaucer, excellent as they occasionally are, but even then unfortunately, most inapplicable. With the recollections of the preceding description of the Parson fresh on his mind, does not the reader think he has just drunk a draught from that well of English undefiled, of which Spenser speaks in connexion with his great predecessor? It is a melancholy mistake, it seems: that description forms one of the very pieces that Dryden, to use his own words, *translated into English;*— is one of the "rough diamonds" which he undertook to

"polish," in order to make it shine. Well, let us see the result :—

> "A parish priest was of the pilgrim train ;
> An awful, reverend, and religious man.
> His eyes diffused a venerable grace,
> And charity itself was in his face.
> Rich was his soul, though his attire was poor ;
> (As God had clothed his own ambassador ;)
> For such on earth his bless'd Redeemer bore.
> Of sixty years he seem'd ; and well might last
> To sixty more, but that he lived too fast ;
> Refin'd himself to soul, to curb the sense,
> And made almost a sin of abstinence.
> Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,
> But such a face as promised him sincere ;
> *Nothing reserved, or sullen was to see,*
> But sweet regards, and pleasing sanctity.
> Mild was his accent, *and his action free.*
> With eloquence innate his tongue was arm'd ;
> Though harsh, the precept yet the people charm'd.
> For letting down the golden chain on high,
> He drew his audience upward to the sky ;
> And oft with holy hymns he charm'd their ears,
> (A music more melodious than the spheres).
> *For David left him, when he went to rest,*
> *His lyre ; and after him, he sung the best.*"

Now there are beautiful lines in this. It could not be otherwise when Dryden was their author ; but what has become of the patriarchal simplicity, which forms one of the great charms of the original? There is plenty of fancy and vigour, no doubt, but where are the repose, humility, and grandeur of the poore Parson? The poet Dryden has shown himself, as a poet, unquestionably, and that so often, that one hardly loses for an instant the consciousness of his presence ; but we take leave to prefer the utter forgetfulness of self, in entire absorption into the subject, that characterises Chaucer. If from generals we descend to particulars, Dryden's verses become in parts positively ludicrous. Passing over such negative excellences as that he was not "sullen" nor "reserved," and such positive ones, as that his "action" was "free," who can help smiling at the picture of the poore Parson letting down the golden chain ; or at the very mysterious character of that lyre, which David, it seems, bequeathed to him, when he went to rest, and on which the Parson performed such musical wonders? The fact is, Dryden did not live long enough to get rid of all his early heresies. It took him the greater part of the period he did live to unlearn and unsay what

he had at the outset of his career learned and said concerning Shakspere, (the successive stages of this recantation, let us observe, by the way, are among the most interesting and gratifying things in literary history ;) who knows but that glorious John would, had he been spared but a quarter of a century longer, have proved himself no less worthy of his pre-eminence with regard to the morning Star of our Poetry ?

Prof. J. R. Seeley has suggested that Chaucer drew his picture of the Parson from his contemporary, John Wyclif. We must all hope that he did. Certainly the Reformer's teaching, had it been followed, would have brought all English priests to the Poet's standard. The student should not fail to study Williams' Vision of Piers Ploughman, in one of Prof. Skeat's editions, in connection with the religious questions of Chaucer's day, besides the authorities referred to on p. 93.

Section IV.

PROFESSIONAL MEN.—THE SERGEANT-AT-LAW.

VERY characteristic feature of old times in England, is shown to us in the 'Canterbury Tales,' where the members of many different classes of society, being brought together by a common object, mingle freely together; the rich and the proud undeterred by any of that feverish desire to stand aloof from their fellow-men, and the poor and humble, by any of that chilling sense of dependence, which too often mark the relations of those classes in our own day. What motive of an equally powerful nature to that which induced our ancestors to go on pilgrimages to so many different shrines (could such a motive be found), would now suffice to bring the sergeant-at-law and "justice full often at assize" into intimate companionship with the ploughman, the miller, the host? Yet there is no reason to doubt Chaucer's fidelity; he only painted what in all probability he had frequently seen; whilst at the same time it must be observed that sergeants-at-law were then personages of still greater importance than now. They were the Judges of England; and were chosen only from among the most opulent, as well as most learned members of the profession. It would have been highly unreasonable indeed to have done otherwise, considering the great expenses that attended their investiture with the sergeant's robes and coif. They were bound to give a "great dinner like to the feast of a king's coronation," which was to "continue and last for the space of seven days;" and it was expressly provided, says our authority,[1] "that none of those elected should defray the charges growing to him about the costs of the solemnity, with less expenses than the sum of 400 marks:" an immense sum in those days.

Stow's account of the preparations for the table, reads like the account of a feast for a people, rather than for a sergeants' dinner. There were, it appears, twenty-four "great beefs," then valued at 26*s.* 8*d.* each, and one valued at 24*s.*; one

[1] Dugdale's 'Origines Juridiciales.'

THE SERJEANT-AT-LAW.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"Discreet he was and of great reverence,
He seemèd such, his wordès were so wise."

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hundred fat muttons, valued at 2*s.* 10*d.* each ; fifty-one great veals, at 4*s.* 8*d.* each ; thirty-four porks, or boars, at 3*s.* 3*d.* ; ninety-one pigs, at 6*d.* ; ten dozen "capons of Grecce of one poulter," 1*s.* 8*d.* ; nine dozen and six capons of Kent, at 1*s.* ; innumerable pullets, at 2*d.* and 2½*d.* the dozen ; pigeons, at 2*d.* the dozen ; and larks, at 5*d.* the dozen. As a magnificent conclusion, came *fourteen dozen* swans, the prices of which are not recorded.

The other chief items of expenditure, were the gold rings, one of which was given to every important personage present at the ceremony of creation, from the prince down to the "officers and other notable men in the king's courts,"—and the countless suits or liveries of cloth that were expected from the newly-made sergeant-at-law by the members of his household, by his friends, and his acquaintances. All this has been since done away with, the society being disbanded. As several sergeants were generally created at the same time, it was found most convenient for them to join in giving one common feast ; which, as we have seen, became a most magnificent affair, and was generally held in one of the chief palaces of London. The eleven sergeants made by Henry VIII., in 1531, kept their feast at Ely-house, Holborn ; when the king himself, with his consort Katherine, honoured them, on the principal of the five days the feast then lasted, with their presence. They sat, Stow has remarked, in "two chambers," that is to say, apart from each other (they were divorced within the next eighteen months) ; and the foreign ambassadors occupied a third. "In the hall, at the high table, sat Sir Nicholas Lambard, mayor of London, the judges, the barons of the exchequer, with certain aldermen of the city. At the board on the south side sat the master of the rolls, the master of the chancery, and worshipful citizens. On the north side of the hall, certain aldermen began the board, and then followed merchants of the city. In the cloister, chapel, and gallery, knights, esquires, and gentlemen were placed. In the halls, the crafts of London. *The sergeants-at-law and their wives kept in their own chambers.* It were tedious to set down the preparation of fish, flesh, and other victuals spent in this feast, and would seem almost incredible." He ends by confirming Dugdale's remark, "it wanted little of a feast at a coronation." We must add to this account from Stow, that minstrels and trumpeters were stationed without the hall, the whole time, playing at every course. With such extraordinary expenses to meet on their initiation into the new office, we need not be surprised to find that it was sometimes necessary to summon persons by writ to take it, even although at the same time there was no "man of law throughout the universal world,

which by reason of his office gained so much as one of these sergeants."[1] Such dinners were discontinued before the disbanding of the society, though Sergeants continued to pay a considerable sum (£350) on their entrance.

Such were the rank and importance of this member of the law, at the time the poet introduced him into the Canterbury pilgrimage.

"A Sergeänt of Law, wary and wise,
That often hadde been at the *Parvise*,
There was alsó, full rich of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of great reverence:
He seemèd such, his wordès were so wise.
Justice he was full often in assize,
By patent, and by pleine[2] commissïoun.
For his sciénce, and for his high renown,
Of fees and robès had he many one.
So great a purchaser[3] was no where none.
All was fee-simple to him in effect,
His purchasing might not be in suspect.[4]
Nowhere so busy a man as he there n'as,
And yet he seemèd busier than he was.
In termès had he case and doomès all,
That from the time of King Will weren fall.
Thereto he could indite, and make a thing
That couldè no man pinch at[5] his writíng,
And every statute could he plain by rote.
He rode but homely in a medley coat,
Girt with a seint[6] of silk, with barrès small."

Warton, speaking of the word Parvis, says that it is supposed to be derived from Paradise, which derivation Mr. Richardson adopts in his Dictionary. Many of our old religious houses had a place called the Paradise; hence, perhaps, the name came to be applied to the porticos of churches, as was the case both in the French and English languages. We find in Chaucer's translation from the 'Roman de la Rose' the following passage:—

"There was no wight in all Paris
Before Our Lady[7] at Parvis,
That they ne might the bookè buy:"

and Warton says that in the year 1300 children were taught to read and sing in the Parvis of St. Martin's church at Norwich.

[1] Dudgale.
[2] Pleine—full.
[3] Prosecutor, and getter.
[4] Suspicion.
[5] *Pinch at*, lay hold of flaws in *his writing*.
[6] Cinct, or girdle.
[7] Notre Dame.

The same word was also used in connexion with the schools of "Sophistry" formerly existing in Oxford, which consisted of academic exercises, principally in logic, held in the afternoon. The Parvis to which Chaucer's Sergeant-at-Law "often hadde been," stood in the same relation to the law that the Oxford schools did to logic. "Here not only young lawyers repaired to learn, but old sergeants to teach and show their cunning."[1] We learn also from Fortescue, that the Courts of Law were shut after mid-day, and that the lawyers then went to meet their clients, and hold consultations at the Parvis, and elsewhere. The metropolitan parvis was the portico of St. Paul's Cathedral, where the sergeants chose their respective pillars, as the more eminent members of the Stock Exchange do in *their* place of meeting to this day: and a noisy, bustling scene St. Paul's portico must have presented at such times. In a manuscript written by one of the benchers of Middle Temple Hall, about 1660, complaint is made that the young students of the Temple, having no place to walk in and converse, make their church their promenade and study, and that during Term Time, by reason of the confluence of suitors, the sacred building had no more quietness in it than the Pervyse of Pawle's. The lines,

> "In termès had he case and doomès all,
> That from the time of King Will weren fall,"

imply that the Sergeant was thoroughly familiar with all the cases and dooms, or decisions, which had been given from the time of the Conqueror. Chief Justice Glanvil, who lived in the reign of Henry II., appears to have been the most eminent of those early writers who reduced the feudal laws and customs into treatises, and thus laid the foundation of the system of English jurisprudence; which, it is evident from the passage before us, had not in Chaucer's time been materially affected by the introduction of the study of the Roman or civil law in the twelfth century. Chaucer says, in connexion with our Sergeant's performance of some of the humbler duties of the legal profession, that no one—

> "——couldè pinch at his writíng."

Was then professional subtlety and precision so very powerfully developed in the lawyers of the fourteenth century, or was it that they worked on good principles? The answer is given by Chief Justice Hale, who, speaking of the character of the rolls of

[1] Waterhouse's 'Commentary on Fortescue.'

judicial proceedings of the reign of Edward I., commends the clearness and perspicuity of the pleadings, of the laws upon which the pleadings proceeded, and of the judgments finally given; he especially notices the freedom of the whole from multiplicity of words. Would we could revive these lawyers of the middle ages, to infuse a little common sense into our own acts of parliament, and into the interminable discussion and litigation to which their wordy jargon gives rise.

The Sergeants, so called originally from the word *serviens* expressing their connexion with the crown as its servants, were summoned from the inns of court by the sovereign. These inns originally consisted of three bodies, the benchers, the utter barristers, and the inner barristers; the last being the students, the second a body more advanced, and chosen from the students, whilst from them again were chosen the benchers, or governing body. The name barrister is in all probability derived from the bar that separated the upper part of the hall, which was raised on a dais, from the lower. Here the students were congregated as listeners, when mootings or readings were going on; but the utter or outer barristers were, in due progress of time and study, called upward to a seat near the bar, and there they conducted the proceedings. The Readings took place at least twice in every year, and were marked by great solemnity. The Reader, having selected some statute, recited the doubts which had arisen, or might arise upon it, and ended by a declaration of his own judgment. Then the utter barristers generally debated the matter, and to conclude the whole, the sergeants and judges present also gave their opinions. Some of the most profound judicial papers in the language were originated by these readings: as, for instance, that by Lord Bacon on the Statute of Uses. The Mootings, which were hardly less valuable, and much more interesting, formed an appropriate appendage to the Readings, by indirectly testing the amount of benefit the students derived from the latter, and by directly carrying forward their legal education. The Reader now sat in the open hall, accompanied by some of the utter barristers, whilst on each side two of the inner barristers or students took their places, as counsel respectively for an imaginary plaintiff and defendant. The case chosen, was of course one that involved nice points of law; and when it had been fully stated on both sides by the more juvenile counsel, two utter barristers expressed their opinions upon the points raised, and finally the Reader, and the older benchers who sat with him, summed up. Such was the training of the bodies from which all the high legal functionaries of the realm were to be chosen. The first stage of progress in

active life, for those who aimed at distinction, was in Chaucer's period that of apprentice-at-law, the barristers who bore that appellation forming the inferior class of advocates in the king's court. Above these stood the sergeants-at-law, who were the principal advocates, and who also acted as assessors to the chief justiciar, while his office lasted. But in Chaucer's time, a great change took place in the supreme judicial establishments of the country. The office of Chief Justiciar, who had previously presided over the three divisions of the great court of the sovereign, the *Aula Regis*, was then abolished; and the three courts of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer, each assumed a separate and independent existence. The sergeants were chosen as judges of the two former; but the latter, being then considered merely a court for the regulation of revenue, required no *legal* superior, and was therefore generally placed under the care of some nobleman. Hence, until the passing of the Judicature Act, we had a chief *justice*, and a certain number of *judges* of the King's Bench and of the Common Pleas; but *barons* of the Exchequer. And the customs thus established were still in force, even to the fact that these "justices" and "judges" required to be chosen from the body of sergeants; and that the "barons" could not act as judges of assize without possessing the same qualification. The changes relative to the general business of criminal and civil jurdisdiction throughout the country, that took place also in the poet's lifetime, were scarcely less important than those connected with the supreme courts. The first mode of avoiding the inconveniences attached to the custom of congregating together in the Aula Regis, at Westminster (or wherever it pleased his majesty to be during *term* time), all the causes civil and criminal that the crime or the litigation of England generally gave rise to, was the appointment of itinerating judges, the justices in Eyre, as they were called, who went their rounds, at first about every seven years; but in the reign of Edward III. this system was put an end to, and the whole of the business of the Eyre judges (excepting that relating especially to forests) devolved upon the judges of assize, who had been appointed in the reign of Edward I. to travel through the country twice a year, to try, by a peaceable mode, the writs of right that had been formerly determined only by the bloody and barbarous system of trial by combat. The actions at Nisi Prius had been previously added to the assize "writs;" and thus the present system of assizes arose, which is still known by the name of the business in which it originated, although that business has entirely disappeared, and the meaning of the term itself is now familiar only to the legal antiquary. As the judges at assize were in fact

the judges of the supreme courts, they were also, as we have already shown, men necessarily possessing "the degree of the coif, which was ceased to be conferred."

Three Inns were at one period occupied exclusively by the Sergeants, for their practice, and occasional residence ; situated respectively in Holborn, Fleet Street, and Chancery Lane. The first was abandoned long ago, the second burnt down in the last century, and the third remains ;—the Sergeants' Inn of Chancery Lane, rebuilt in 1838, which contained chambers for fourteen sergeants, in addition to the accommodation required for those sergeants who were also common law judges, to dispose of such cases as the legislature had intrusted to the decision of a single judge. The remaining or junior sergeants, while waiting for a vacancy, were dispersed through the different Inns of Court.

Our Sergeant, it appears, had received many "fees and robès ;' another custom, as regards the robes, peculiar to ancient England, when all the officers of the superior courts of law received from the king's wardrobe such clothing both for summer and winter. Of the dress of the Sergeant in the fourteenth century, the 'Vision of Piers Ploughman' gives us some idea. We read there,—

> "Shall no Sergeant for his service wear no silk hood
> Nor pelure on his cloak for pleading at the bar."

In the Ellesmere manuscript he wears a scarlet habit, with open sleeves, faced with blue, and ornamented with small bars or stripes. His white furred hood is upon his shoulders, and he wears the characteristic distinction of the Sergeant, the coif upon his head. This "medley" dress continued to be worn even in Dugdale's time. The robes were then of three colours, murrey (or dark red), black furred with white, and scarlet. At the date of disbanding the Society the arrangements were, a gown of black cloth for term time on ordinary occasions ; violet coloured for Court or holidays ; scarlet for processions to St. Paul's, dinners at Guildhall, or when they attended the House of Lords during the sovereign's presence ; black silk for trials at Nisi Prius ; which ought to have been, but seldom was, exchanged for the scarlet, with the sentence cap, when called upon on circuits to try causes or prisoners.

We may observe, in conclusion, that among the exquisite touches of satirical description with which the Canterbury Tales abound, there are none happier than that which paints one of the little affectations of the eminent lawyer :

> "No where so busy a man as he there n'as,
> *And yet he seemed busier than he was.*"

Chaucer has described (in a passage that we shall transcribe elsewhere) his own personal appearance, as one of the pilgrims:—in connexion with the man of law, as the Sergeant is called, he further alludes to his previous writings, as though desirous to make a niche for them, too, in his great edifice—the Canterbury Tales. The Sergeant, while agreeing that he must do his best, like the other pilgrims, to contribute to the common fund of entertainment, observes,

"————but nathèless certaín
I can right now no other talè sain,
But Chaucer (though he can but lewedly[1]
On metres and on rhyming certainly)
Hath said them, in such English as he can
Of oldè time, as knoweth many a man.
And if he have not said them, levè[2] brother,
In one book, he hath said them in another.
For he hath told of lovers up and down,
More than Ovidè made of mentïoun
In his *Epistoûs*, that ben so old.
What should I tellen them, since they be told?
In youth he made of Ceyx and Alcyone,[3]
And sithen hath he spoke of every one,
These noble wivès, and these lovers eke.
Whoso that will his largè volume seek,
Clepèd the saintès legend of Cupíde[4];
There may he see the largè woundes wide
Of Lucrece, and of Babylon Thisbé;
The sorrow of Dido for the false Ænee;
The tree of Phyllis for her Demophon,
The plaint of Dian', and of Hermion,
Of Ariadne, and Hypsipilè,[5]—
The barren islè standing in the sea;
The drown'd Leander for his fair Heró[6];
The tears of Helenè, and eke the woe
Of Briseïs, and of Ladomia[7];
The cruelty of thee, queen Medea;
Thy little children hanging by the halse[8],
For thy Jasón, that was of love so false.
O Hipermnéstra, Penelope, Alceste,
Your wifehood he commendeth with the best," &c.

Altogether an interesting passage in Chaucer's biography.

[1] Ignorantly. [2] Dear. [3] The first part of 'the Dethe of [Blaunche.']
[4] 'The Legend of Good Women.' It does not contain all the women mentioned here. See Prof. Skeat's edition, 1889.

[5] *Hypsipile* of *the barren isle*, &c.
[6] That is, Hero weeping for her dead-Leander.
[7] Laodamia. [8] Neck.

THE MANCIPLE.

THE name of this officer of our old inns of court, colleges, etc., whose business it was to purchase their provisions, is supposed to be derived from the Latin word *manceps*, which signified more particularly the superintendent of a public bakehouse, and from thence a baker generally.

"A gentle Manciple was there, of a temple;
Of which achatours[1] mighten take example
For to be wise in buying of vitaille;
For whether that he paid, or took by taille,[2]
Algate[3] he waited[4] so in his achate,
That he was aye before, and in good state.
Now is not that of God a full fair grace,
That such a lewèd[5] mannè's wit shall pace[6]
The wisdom of a heap of learnèd men?
Of masters had he more than thriès ten
That were of law expert and curïous,
Of which there were a dozen in a house,
Worthy to be stewàrdes of rent and land
Of any lord that is in Engè-land.
To make him livè by his proper good,
In honour debtèless, but[7] he were wood;[8]
Or live as scarcely[9] as he can desire,
And able for to helpen all a shire,
In any casè that might fall or hap:
And yet this Manciple set their aller[10] cap."

Or, as we should now say, made fools of them. In the absence of any necessity for illustrating this description, the tale told by the Manciple may furnish matter for a few extracts and observations. This is a curious medley. Phœbus, it appears, once dwelt "in earth adown," and had a house and a wife, and various other domestic comforts. He had also—

"In his house a crow,
Which in a cage he fostered many a day,
And taught it speaking, as men do a jay.

[1] Purchasers.
[2] That is to say, on credit, using the *tally* as the mode of reckoning.
[3] Always.
[4] Watched, or, in other words, was ever so attentive to his business of purchasing.
[5] Unlearned. [6] Pass or surpass. [7] Unless.
[8] Mad. [9] Sparingly. [10] Of them all.

THE MANCIPLE.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"Of which Achatours [purchasers] mighten take exemple,
For to be wise in buying of victuaille."

Page 108.]

White was this crow, as is a snow-white swan ;
And counterfeit the speech of every man
He couldè, when he shouldè tell a tale.
There is within this world no nightingale
Ne couldè by a hundred thousand del,[1]
Singen so wondrous merrily and well."

And it would appear that all crows prior to this period possessed the same beauty of voice and feather. But a dark fate overhangs Phœbus and his poor crow : he is unhappily wedded to one altogether unsuited to him, and, to make matters worse, endeavours to coerce her by restraint, as well as to win her by love and kindness. But all is in vain. No man may hope to "embrace" and keep a thing, however much he loves it, in spite of the qualities

"which natúre
Hath naturally set in a creature ;"

and the story continues with the following sweet passage, for which, indeed, we chiefly referred to it :—

"Take any bird, and put him in a cage,
And do all thine intent, and thy courage ;[2]
To foster it tenderly with meat and drink,
And with all dainties that thou canst bethink,
And keep it all so kindly as thou may ;
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet had this bird by twenty thousand fold
Liever[3] to be in forest, wild and cold,
Go eating wormès, and such wretchedness :
For ever this bird will do his business
To, scape out of his cage, when that he may :
His liberty the bird desireth aye."

Phœbus is informed by the crow of his wife's faithlessness in his absence, and immediately kills her. Remorse now seizes him, and he believes—unjustly—that the crow has deceived him. So, after bewailing his loss with great grief and lamentation, he turns to the poor crow:—

"O, falsè thief, said he,
I will thee quit anon thy falsè tale ;
Thou sung whilom as any nightingale ;
Now shalt thou, falsè thief, thy song foregone,
And eke thy whitè feathers every one.

[1] A *del* is a bit or part. [2] Desire. [3] Rather.

Ne never in all thy life ne shalt thou speak ;
Thus shall men on a false thief be a-wreak.[1]
Thou and thine offspring ever shall be black ;
Ne never sweetè noisè shall ye make ;
But ever cry against tempést and rain,
In token that through thee my wife was slain."

And so crows became black, and thus, in effect, ends this veritable history.

In the Ellesmere MS. the Manciple has in his hand the bottle of wine with which he helped to make the Cook drunk ; he wears a blue cloak lined with red, red hose and a red cap ; and he has a red purse hanging on his girdle. He rides a dun horse.

[1] Avenged.

THE DOCTOR OF PHYSIC.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"In all this world ne there was none him like,
To speak of physic, and of surgery. . .
For he was grounded in astronomy.

He was a very perfect practisour."

[*Page* 111.

THE DOCTOR OF PHYSIC.

N the elaborate portrait which the poet has given us of this member of the Canterbury pilgrimage, we have a striking exemplification of the state of medical science in the fourteenth century, and of the qualifications requisite for the attainment of eminence in the profession. It is said of this

> "————————Doctor of physíke,
> In all this world ne was there none him like
> To speak of physic, and of surgery;
> For he was grounded in astronomy.
> He kept his patient wonderfully well
> In hourès, by his magic natural.
> Well could he fortunè[1] the áscendant
> Of his imáges, for his patïent."

By "astronomy" we must rather understand astrology, the two being more or less confounded in the history of science, down even to a much later period than that of Chaucer. In astrology, then, the heavens were divided into twelve parts or houses; through which, in the course of twenty-four hours, all the heavenly bodies passed; and in which there was an endless diversity as to the particular bodies contained in them at any particular time. Of these houses, the most important was the first, containing the portion of the heavens about to rise, called therefore the ascendant; of the bodies, the planets were the more influential, as forming the system to which man's own home, the world, belonged. Each planet had one house, of which he was pre-eminently the lord. Now, if we attach to these twelve houses the subjects with which they were presumed to have an intimate connexion, as, life with the first, riches with the second, brethren and parents with the third and fourth, and so on; and if, at the same time, we attribute to the planets certain essential qualities or influences, as war to Mars, and love to Venus, we have before us the principal materials from which the science—as it was long esteemed—of Astrology, was built up. The application of the science may be thus briefly illustrated. Was it desired to know a child's future destiny? The aspect of the heavens at the very instant of his birth was noted by the astrologer, and the result predicted, as to whether his life should be long or short, poor or rich, in accordance with the favourable or

[1] Make fortunate.

unfavourable conjunctions, powers, and influences of the heavenly bodies that, at the point of time in question, ruled the respective houses of life and of wealth.

But the bold men of the middle ages were not, it seems, content with the knowledge of the lore of the stars, but they must interfere, and, to a certain extent, guide them, in their rule over temporal affairs. The natural Magicians came to the aid of the Astrologers, and when things were not going exactly right, why, they could interfere, and put them in a better track ; at least so they believed, or professed to believe ; and Chaucer's Doctor of Physic was of the number. He, clever man ! when he saw any danger of bad "houres" occurring in connexion with times for taking medicine, for performing operations, or with peculiar crises of his patients' diseases, could prevent it by his "magic natural ;" of which Speght gives us the following information as to the mode of proceeding. It was done by "making of vigils, or characters stamped in metal in their due times, fitted to that part of the body where the malady was ; as the stamp of Aries for the diseases in the head, and of Leo for the reins," etc. And certainly we need not wonder that natural magic could do thus much, or, in short, that it could do anything, however apparently impossible, when we find in other parts of Chaucer's writings, what marvellous feats were performed by it, or when we read Sir John Mandeville's account of the exhibition that took place before the "Grete Chan," in the same century.

"And then come jugglers and enchanters, that do many marvels ; for they make to come in the air the sun and the moon, by seeming, to every man's sight. And after, they make the night so dark, that no man may see no thing. And after, they make the day to come again, fair and pleasant, with bright sun, to every man's sight. And then they bring in dances, of the fairest damsels of the world and richest arrayed. And after, they make to come in other damsels, bringing cups of gold, full of milk of divers beasts, and give drink to lords and to ladies. And then they make knights to joust in arms full lustily ; and they run together at great random, and they fight together full fiercely, and they break their spears so rudely, that the truncheons fly in splints and pieces all about the hall. And then they make to come in hunting for the hart and for the boar, with hounds running with open mouth. And many other things they do by craft of their enchantments, that it is marvellous for to see. And such plays of disport they make, till the taking up of the boards."[1] It should seem, that the jugglers and

[1] Or, in other words, until the clearing of the tables.

enchanters, or as they were called, "tregetours," of Chaucer's day in England, are rivalled in our own by the Egyptian magicians, of whom Mr. Lane, in his work on Egypt, relates such marvels ; and of which in connexion with other countries we are from time to time hearing.

The art of medicine, if art it might be called at this period in England, was borrowed from ancient Greece ; with such improvements only as may have been made in it by the Arabs, who translated the principal Grecian writers into their language, and became during the seventh and five following centuries the most eminent practitioners in the world. As an evidence of their great reputation, it may be observed that Sancho the Fat, king of Leon, went in person, in 956, to Cordova, the then great capital of Moorish Spain, to be cured of an illness. Not long before Chaucer's time, the works of the principal Greek and Arabic writers, having been translated into Latin, found their way into this country, and so formed the basis of that art which now (cleared of the superstitions in which it was formerly embedded) stands pre-eminently forward as one of the greatest blessings of civilization. About the period of the 'Canterbury Tales,' these superstitions existed in full vigour. A physician who was no astronomer would then have been looked upon, probably, as we look upon a quack ; ignorance, in both cases, of the knowledge indispensable to the successful cultivation of the art being presumed. Thus we find that Hugo de Evesham (of Worcestershire), who studied not only at both the universities of England, but subsequently at those of France and Italy also, and who became the most famous physician of his day—he too, we find it recorded, was scarcely less distinguished for his mathematics and astronomy. Again, his great contemporary Roger Bacon, far-sighted and singularly unprejudiced to existing opinions as he was, remarks, in his 'Opus Major,' that *astronomy is the better part of medicine.* Charles V. of France, who directed his every movement by the advice of his astrologers, established a college of medicine and astrology in the university of Paris. In the continuation of the 'Canterbury Tales,' before referred to, under the title of the 'Tale of Beryn,' we find a surgical operation on the eyes performed by the assistance of the occult sciences, l. 3723-6, p. 111, ed. Furnivall :

> "But untill wele the whole science of al surgery
> Was unyd,[1] or the chaunge was made of both his eye[2]
> With many sotill enchantours and eke negrymauncers
> That sent were for the nonis,[3] maistris and scoleris."

[1] United. [2] Eyes. [3] Nonce—occasion.

Lastly, we may observe that Persia, even to this day, abounds with physicians and astrologers: and a Persian rarely follows the prescriptions of the one class, without first ascertaining from the other, that the constellations are favourable to the proposed remedy.

Not content with these peculiar modes of healing, borrowed from the superstitions of the East, our English forefathers added others of their own, derived from their religious views. Thus, relics formed a part of the Materia Medica; and were carried about for exhibition to the sick on payment of a fee. Hairs of a saint's head dipped in holy water, are mentioned by Matthew Paris. A ring that had belonged to Remigius, being dipped in holy water, furnished, it is said, a drink good for fever and other diseases. Yet we must not suppose, after all, that our ancient physicians relied on the virtue of these astrological and saintly influences, to the neglect of more substantial medical knowledge or skill. Chaucer's 'Doctor of Physic,' for instance, besides being so well "grounded in astronomy,"—

> "—Knew the cause of every malady,
> Were it of cold or hot, or moist or dry,
> And where engendered, and of what humoúr:
> He was a very perfect practisour.
> The cause yknown, and of his harm the root,
> Anon he gave the sickè man his boot.[1]
> Full ready had he his apothecaries
> To send him druggès, and his lectuaries;
> For each of them made other for to win:
> Their friendship was not newè to begin."

Dr. Freind, in his 'History of Physic,' gives still more emphatic testimony to the same effect. He says, "Though we find the people of that age had great faith in charms and other empirical applications, yet the general practise was carried on chiefly in the rational way, as it had been delivered down from the Greeks." This subject receives further illustration from the description Chaucer gives us of the doctor's library:—

> "Well knew he the olde Æsculapius,
> And Dioscorides, and eke Rufús;
> Old Hippocras, Hali, and Gallien,
> Serapion, Rhazes, and Avicen,
> Averroes, Damascene, and Constantine,
> Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertine."

[1] Remedy.

Of these authors, the names of Æsculapius, Hippocrates, Galen, and Dioscorides are too well known to need any comment here; but a few words on the others may not be unacceptable. Rufus, a physician of Ephesus, about the time of Trajan, wrote various medical works in Greek, of which only a portion remains; a valuable portion, however, since it shows us the state of anatomical knowledge before the time of Galen. We learn from it, for instance, that all anatomical demonstrations were made upon beasts "Choose an ape for dissection," ran the directions to a student in those days, "if you have one; if not, take a bear; and if you have not a bear, take any animal you can get." Hali was a famous Arabian astronomer, and a commentator on Galen, in the eleventh century, which produced many eminent Arabic physicians; among the rest, John Serapion, and Avicen, the most eminent of the number. There, were, however, three Serapions: one of Alexandria, in the third century before Christ, who wrote vehemently against Hippocrates, and studied deeply the nature of all

"Baleful weeds and precious-juicèd flowers;"

another of Syria, about the tenth century, called Serapion Senior, who collected and abridged the opinions of the Greek and Arabian medical philosophers; and who, curiously enough, treats of diseases as curative solely by medicine and diet, omitting operative surgery, and what is termed hygiene; and thirdly, Serapion Junior (the John Serapion of Dr. Freind); an Arab, who has left us one of the most important, and, in his own time, one of the most useful of Arabic medical books: this was probably the Serapion of Chaucer. Some amusing examples might be culled from John Serapion's works, of the mixture of ignorance and credulity with much that was at once learned and excellent. "Amber," he says, "grows in the sea like mushrooms on land. In China there are some persons solely engaged in fishing for this substance. That which floats on the sea is swallowed by the whale, and quickly causes its death. When the animal's body is opened, the best amber is found near the vertebral column, and the worst in the stomach." We would not advise our Greenland fishermen to be *too* sure of finding it in either place, when they next catch a whale, and look for the precious commodity. Avicen, as Chaucer has it, but Al-Sheikh Al-Rayis Abu Ali Al-Hossein Ben Abdallah Ben Sina, as it should be, is one of the great names of medical literature, and belongs to the tenth and eleventh centuries. The list of his writings, like his name, is of startling length; and one book alone, a commentary on a previous work,

extended to twenty volumes. His 'Kânûn' became the standard medical authority throughout Europe; chiefly, it seems, for its clear and comprehensive view of all that was previously known on the subject. Avicenna (as he is popularly called) was not only a physician and a philosopher, but a statesman, having acted as vizier to the sovereign of the town of Hamadan at one period, and at another and earlier having been minister to the Sultan of Bokhara. Rhazes, or Razes, was an Arabian physician, who practised at Bagdad in the tenth century, and was esteemed and called the Galen of his time. The amount of his writings almost surpasses belief; there being upwards of two hundred distinct works attributed to him. He was a great traveller, and one incident of his travels affords a striking idea of his practical ability. Passing through the streets of Cordova, in Spain, he saw a crowd collected round the body of a man who was said to have fallen dead just before. Rhazes caused him to be beaten all over with rods, particularly on the soles of his feet, and so, within a few minutes, restored him to life. He was blind in his latter days, and was about to have an operation performed; but finding that the surgeon could not tell how many membranes the eye contained, he declined. It was urged that the operation might nevertheless succeed; but Rhazes answered with profound melancholy, "I have seen so much of the world, that I am wearied of it." Averroes belonged to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He was born at Cordova, where he imbibed all the learning of the Arabian teachers of the day, and subsequently succeeded his father as Mufti of Andalusia. He was a great admirer of Aristotle, whose works he translated. As the Asiatic schools decayed, those of Africa and Spain began to flourish; and among the chief teachers of the latter was Averroes. John Damascene was secretary to one of the caliphs; he wrote on various sciences before the Arabians had entered Europe, and had seen the Grecian philosophers. He was, however, more famous for his religious than his medical writings; and obtained for his eloquence the name of the Golden-flowing.

Constantinus Afer, a monk of Cassino in Italy, was one of the Saracen physicians who brought medicine into Europe, and formed the Salernitan school (the first of the kind established in Europe), chiefly by translating various Arabian and Grecian medical books into Latin. His history is peculiarly interesting. He was born at Carthage, and learned grammar, logic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and natural philosophy of the Chaldees, Arabians, Persians, Saracens, Egyptians, and Indians, in the schools of Bagdad. Being completely accomplished in these sciences, after thirty-nine years of study he

returned into Africa, where an attempt was formed against his life. Constantine, having fortunately discovered the design, privately took ship, and came to Salerno in Italy, where he lurked for some time in disguise. But he was recognised by the Caliph's brother, then at Salerno ; who recommended him, as a scholar universally skilled in the learning of all nations, to the notice of Robert, duke of Normandy. Robert entertained him with the highest marks of respect ; and Constantine, by the advice of his patron, retired to the monastery of Cassino ; where, being kindly received by the Abbot Desiderius, he translated, in that learned society, the books above mentioned, most of which he first imported into Europe. These versions are said to be still extant. He flourished about the year 1086.

Bernard or Bernardus Gordonius appears to have been Chaucer's contemporary. He was a Professor of Medicine at Montpelier, and wrote many treatises on the art.

John Gatisden was a fellow of Merton College, in the University of Oxford, about the year 1320. Dr. Freind gives an interesting account of him. He was the author of a famous medical work called 'Rosa Anglica'; and though, to confess the truth, he was not much better than an empiric, yet he seems to have been one of the best in that way, and managed his affairs with great address. He was, as it appears from his own writings, ingenious enough to see through the foibles of human nature ; he could form a good judgment how far mankind could be imposed upon ; and never failed to make his advantage of their credulity. He is very artful in laying baits for the delicate, for the ladies, for the rich. For the former he has such a tenderness, that he condescends to instruct them even in perfumes and washes, especially how to dye their hair ; and such a respect for the latter, that he is always studying to invent some of the most select and dearest medicines for them. He was also a poet. Scarce a page of his works, but he quotes the verses of others or inserts his own. He was the first Englishman employed at court as a physician, and had the care of the king's son (a son of either Edward I. or Edward II.) in the small-pox. Here he played his game very well : to show his skill in inflammatory disorders, he, with a proper formality and countenance of much importance, ordered the patient to be wrapped in scarlet, and everything about the bed to be red ; no doubt the room was hung in the same manner. This, he says, made him recover, without so much as leaving one mark upon the face. Whenever a scrofulous case does not submit to the sovereign remedies, such as the blood of a weasel or doves-dung, he exhorts the person immediately to apply to the king for the royal touch. He acquaints us with his great skill in

physiognomy ; and did design, if God would give him life and leisure, to write a treatise of chiromancy, or fortune-telling.

"Gilbertine, I suppose," says Warton, "is Gilbertus Anglicus, who flourished in the thirteenth century, and wrote a popular compendium of the art, and was the first of his countrymen who enjoyed any repute in that way."

The distinctions of the three regular orders into which the profession is now divided, were also known in Chaucer's time ; as we perceive from the preceding passages, where it is stated that there were none like his doctor in the world, to speak of *physic* or of *surgery*, and that he had his *apothecaries* full ready to send him his drugs.

Works by an English surgeon of Chaucer's age, John Ardern, are preserved ; and what is more to the purpose, a French writer, Guy de Cauliac, of the same period, shows us the actual state of surgery : "Practitioners," he states, "are divided into five sects. The first follow Roger and Roland, and the four masters, and apply poultices to all wounds and abscesses ; the second follow Brunus and Theodoric, and in the same cases use wine only ; the third follow Saliceto and Lanfranc, and treat wounds with ointment and soft plasters ; the fourth are chiefly Germans, who attend the armies, and promiscuously use charms, potions, oil, and wool ; the fifth are old women and ignorant people, who have recourse to the saints in all cases." Of the apothecaries, the poet says all that is requisite. We see it was then as to a large extent it yet remains ; the doctors found employment for the drugs, and the drugs in return made ample employment for the doctors. Chaucer says of the physicians and the apothecaries :—

"Their friendship was not newè to begin :"

and certainly there is little promise of their friendship coming to an end. The doctor's title shows that degrees were granted thus early to proficients in medical education. That of Bachelor of Physic appears to have been conferred in Oxford soon after the Conquest.

The grant of the high degree of Doctor, a little before, and probably also during Chaucer's time, was attended by much pomp and circumstance. When one of the monks of St. Peter's monastery, Gloucester, took the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1298, he was accompanied in procession by his abbot and all his brethren, the abbots of Westminster, Reading, Malmesbury, Evesham, and Abingdon, numerous other priors and monks, and a hundred mounted gentlemen and esquires, with their horses all richly caparisoned. Physicians were not

allowed to marry until 1451—a circumstance perhaps to be explained by the fact, that up to about the twelfth century they were generally monks or ecclesiastics.

The remainder of Chaucer's description is occupied with those personal traits which exhibit the individual, as well as the class, so vividly, that it is impossible to avoid coming to the conclusion that Chaucer, like all other great painters, drew to a certain extent from the life. Could that sly bit of satire, "his study was but little in the Bible," have crept into the place it occupies, but that the *fact* caught the poet's eye as he glanced over the habits and person of the living Doctor of Physic, who stood before him, unsuspicious of the immortality that awaited him?

> "Of his diét measúrable was he,
> For it was of no superfluity,
> But of great nourishing, and dígestíble.
> His study was but little on the Bible.
> In sanguine and in perse he clad was all,
> Linèd with taffeta, and eke sendál[1];
> And yet he was but easy in dispence;
> He keptè that he won in pestilence[2]:
> For gold in physic is a cordïal;
> Therefore he lovèd gold in speciál."

The wit of this last couplet is enhanced by our knowledge of the literal truth of the notion on which it is founded. The great philosopher before mentioned, Bacon, gives broad hints in his work 'On the Accidents of Old Age,' about a tincture of gold which might contribute greatly to prolong life; and he recites a remarkable story of an old Sicilian ploughman, who, by drinking greedily of a yellowish stream (which our author suspects was impregnated with gold), grew young again, and lived many years in full vigour.

The dress of "sanguine" and "perse" is illustrated in the Ellesmere manuscript by a surcoat of *bright purple*, and a *blue* hood, covering the head, and extending low down upon the shoulders, deeply furred with white. His stockings are also of bright purple. The doctor is here represented as pondering over a patient's urine in a large phial.

[1] A thin silk.

[2] Plagues were continually recurring in early days, owing to the want of drainage, ventilation, cleanliness, and proper food.

THE ALCHEMIST.

As the travellers pursue their way towards Canterbury, they are overtaken by two persons, one evidently the yeoman or servant of the other, whose appearance excites some surprise and speculation. He was dressed, says Chaucer, still speaking in his own person,

> "In clothès black,
> And under that he had a white surplice.
> His hackeney, that was a pomelee gris,[1]
> So sweated, that it wondrous was to see.
> * * * *
> About the peytrel stood the foam full high,
> He was of foam as fleckèd as a pie.
> A mailè twofold[2] on his crupper lay,
> It seemèd that he carried little array;
> All light for summer rode this worthy man.
> And, in mine heartè, wondering I began
> What that he was, till that I understood
> How that his cloak was sewed unto his hood;
> For which when I had long advisèd me,
> I deemèd him some Canon for to be.
> His hat hung at his back down by a lace,
> For he had ridden more than trot or pace;
> He had aye prickèd like as he were wood.[3]
> A clotè-leaf[4] he hadde undèr his hood
> For sweat, and for to keep his head from heat.
> But it was joyè for to see him sweat;
> His forehead droppèd as a stillatory[5]
> Were full of plaintain, or of paritory[6];
> And when that he was come, he 'gan to cry
> God save, quoth he, this jolly company."

The Canon (for such he is) explains that he has been riding fast in order to overtake the pilgrims. The Host, thinking of his favourite scheme, at once endeavours to secure another story, and inquires of the Yeoman if his master can tell a merry one. The Yeoman seemed surprised at the question; that is but a trifle to what his master can do. Well, but what is he,

[1] Or dappled grey. [2] A double mail or portmanteau.
[3] Mad. [4] A leaf of the bur-dock. [5] Still.
[6] The herb now known as pellitory of the wall.

THE CANON'S YEOMAN.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

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demands the Host? "a clerk?" Nay, he is greater than that, replies the Yeoman,—

> "I say, my lord can[1] such a subtilty,
> (But all his craft ye may not weet of me,
> And somewhat help I yet to his workíng),
> That all this ground on which we be ridíng,
> Till that we come to Canterbury town,
> He could all cleanè turnen up so down,[2]
> And pave it all of silver and of gold."

This might do all very well for anybody but Harry Bailly, who has a thorough English hatred of humbug, and so begins to inquire in his own satirical fashion, why the Canon wears so bad a coat. The Yeoman is fain to acknowledge in answer, that he believes his master is "*too* wise in faith," and somehow misuses his "over-great" wit. The Host, continuing his searching queries, demands the cause of the Yeoman's discoloured face, and the truth comes out at last; his master is an alchemist, and he—the Yeoman—blows his fires. And now the Yeoman having found how little his put-on dignity avails, begins to give vent to his real opinions of his master and the multiplying art. The Canon, growing suspicious, comes near, and bids the Yeoman be quiet; but the command is too late; the Host's evident contempt only makes the Yeoman the more eloquent and diffuse in showing how his master deserves it; and so, while the poor Canon, for very sorrow and shame, makes off, the Yeoman thus relates his story:—

> "With this Canón I dwellèd have seven year,
> And of his science am I never the near;[3]
> All that I had, I have ylost thereby;
> And God wot, so hath many more than I.
> There I was wont to be right fresh and gay
> Of clothing, and of other good array,
> Now may I wear a hose upon mine head.
> And where my colour was both fresh and red,
> Now it is wan, and of a leaden hue:
> (Whoso it useth, sorè shall he rue).
> And of my swink[4] yet blindèd is mine eye:
> Lo, such advantage it is to multiply![5]
> That sliding science hath madè me so bare
> That I have no good, where that ever I fare;
> And yet I am indebted so thereby

[1] Knows.
[2] Or, as we should say, turn upside down.
[3] Nigh-er, nearer.
[4] Labour.
[5] Try to turn other metals into gold.

Of gold, that I have borrow'd truëly,
That while I live, shall I it quitten never."

Passing from this lament over his own folly, (to which, however, the Yeoman, in very fulness of heart, frequently returns,) he gives the pilgrims an insight into the mysteries of alchemy :—

"When we be there, as we should exercise
Our elvish[1] craft, we seemen wondrous wise :
Our termès be so clergial[2] and quaint.
I blow the fire till that mine heartè faint.
What should I tellen each proportion
Of things which that we worken up and down,
As a five or six ounces, may well be
Of silver, or some other quantity ?
And busy me to tellen you the names,
As orpiment,[3] burnt bonès, iron squames,[4]
That into powder grounden be full small ?
And in an earthen pot how put is all,
And salt yput in, and also peppére,
Before these powders that I speak of here,
And well ycovered with a lamp of glass ?
And of much other thing which that there was ?
And of the pots and glasses énguluting,[5]
That of the air might passen out no thing ?
And of the easy fire, and smart also,
Which that was made ? and of the care and woe
That we had in our matters súbliming,
And in amalgaming, and calcining
Of quicksilver, yclep'd mercúry crude ?
For all our sleightès we can not conclude.
* * *
There is also full many another thing
That is unto our craft appértaining,
Though I, by order, them not rehearsen can,
Becausè that I am a lewèd[6] man ;
Yet will I tell them, as they come to mind,
Though I ne cannot set them in their kind ;
As bole armeniac, verdigrease, borás,
And sundry vessels made of earth and glass,
——— ———and our descénsories[7]
Vials, croslets,[8] and sublimátories,
Cucurbitès,[9] and álembíkès eke,
And other suchè, dear enough a leek.[10]

[1] Mischievous. [2] Learned. [3] The tri-sulphide of arsenic. [4] Scales.
[5] Luting, or coating with clay. [6] Ignorant.
[7] A vessel for the extraction of oil *per descensum*.
[8] Crucibles. [9] Gourd-shaped vessels.
[10] That is to say dear enough for things of such small value.

Nor needeth it for to rehearse them all?
Waters rubífying, and bullès gall,
Arsenic, sal ammoniac, and brimstóne;
And herbès—could I tell—eke many one,
As agremon', valerian, and lunáry,
And other such, if that me list to tarry;
Our lampès burning bothè night and day
To bring about our craft if that we may;
Our furnace eke of calcinatïon,
And of watérs albificatïon.
Unslackèd limè, chalk, and glaire of ey,[1]
Powders diverse, ashes, ——, ——, and clay,
————, sal-petre, and vitrïole,
And divers firès made of wood and coal,
Sal tartar, alkali, and salt preparát.
And combust' matters, and coagulate;
Clay made with horse or mannes hair, and oil
Of tartar, alum, glass, barm, wort, and argoile.[2]

But amidst all this confusion of the substances for and the means of transmutation, the Yeoman has obtained an inkling of the influences and powers to which they are subsidiary, and upon which the Alchemist more especially relies for success. So the Yeoman tells the pilgrims of "the foure Spirits," and "of the bodies seven:"—

"The first spirít quicksílver clepèd is,
The second orpiment; the third iwis
Sal ammoníac, and the fourth brimstóne.
The bodies seven, eke, lo! them hear anon;
Sol gold is, and Luná silvér we threpe,[3]
Mars iron, Mercury quicksilver we clepe,[4]
Saturnus lead, and Jupiter is tin,
And Venus copper, by my father kin."

But the "cursed craft" only beggars all concerned. In the bitterness of his reflections, the Yeoman calls upon all those who desire to publish their folly, to come and learn the multiplying art; all those who have aught in their coffers, to turn alchemists; and, in so doing, there is no doubt but they will, in one way at least, wax philosophers. The constant disappointment of the chief object is, however, not the only trouble of the Yeoman; *he* often gets blamed for the failure. Having explained that,

[1] Egg.

[2] Not Fr. *argille*, potter's clay, but "Tartre: m. Tartar or Argall, the lees or dregs that sticke to the sides of wine-vessels: hard and drie like a crust, sound, and so close compacted, that you may beat it unto powder." 1611, Cotgrave.

[3] Name. [4] Call.

"Ere that the pot be on the fire ydone
Of metals with a certain quantity,
My lord them tempereth and no man but he;"

he adds, but

"full oft it happeth so,
The pot to-breaketh, and farewell! all is go.
These metals be of so great violence,
Our wallès may not make them résistance,
But if they werè wrought of lime and stone;
They piercen so, that through the wall they gone,
And some of them sinkén into the ground:
Then have we lost by timès many a pound.
And some are scattered all the floor about;
Some leapen into the roof withouten doubt.
Though that the fiend not in our sight him shew,
I trow that he be with us, thilkè shrew!—
In hellè, where that he is lord and sire,
Ne is there no more wo, rancour, ne ire.
When that our pot is broke, as I have said,
Every man chit,[1] and hold him evil apaid:[2]
Some said, it was 'long on[3] the fire makíng;
Some saidè, 'Nay, it was on the blowíng;'
(Then was I 'fear'd, for that was mine office)
'Straw,' quoth the third, 'Ye be lewéd and nice,[4]
It was not tempered as it oughtè be.'
'Nay,' quoth the fourthe, 'stint and hearken me;
Because our firé was not made of beech,
This is the cause, and other none, so the iche.[5]
I cannot tell whereon it was along,
But well I wot, great strife is us among.'
'What?' quoth my lord, 'There n'is no more to doon,
Of these perils I will beware eftsoon;
I am right siker,[6] that the pot was crased.[7]
Be as be may, be ye no thing amazed.
As usage is, let sweep the floor as swithe.[8]
Pluck up your heartès, and be glad and blithe.'"

But notwithstanding all this care to amend what has been found amiss, notwithstanding that when they are together

"Every man seemeth a Solomon;"

they discover in the end the profound truth of the proverb—

"But all thing which that shineth as the gold,
Is not gold."

[1] Chideth. [2] Treated ill. [3] *'Long on*, along of, occasioned by.
[4] *Lewed and nice*, ignorant and foolish.
[5] So may I succeed. [6] Sure. [7] Broken. [8] Quickly.

These passages may give some idea of the admirable and complete picture Chaucer has given us of the alchemist of his day, the men who—

> "Where that ever they gone
> Men may them know by smellè of brimstóne,
> For all the world they stinken as a goat."

THE CLERK OF OXENFORD.[1]

"A clerk there was of Oxenford also,
That unto logic haddè long ygo,[2]
As leanè was his horse as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But lookèd hollow and thereto soberly.
Full threadbare was his overest courtepy;[3]
He had not getten him yet a benefice:
He was nought worldly to have an office.
For him was liever have at his bed's head
A twenty bookès cloth'd in black and red
Of Aristotle and his philosophy,
Than robès rich, or fiddle, or psaltry.
But although that he were a philosopher,
Yet haddè he but little gold in coffer,[4]
But all that he might get, and friendes sent
On bookès, and his learning he it spent;
And busily 'gan for the soulès pray
Of them that gave him wherewith to scholay.
Of study took he mostè care and heed.
Not a word spake he morè than was need;
All that he spake, it was of high prudence,
And short and quick, and full of great sentence;
Sounding in moral virtue was his speech;
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."

THIS very interesting character has much in common with the "poore parson of a town" who has engaged our attention, although the poet, with true dramatic skill, has kept them perfectly distinct from each other; not only as examples of the respective classes to which they belong, but as real personages, having their respective individual characteristics. The same lofty feelings and principles actuate both, assuming in the one instance a deeply religious cast, and in the other an equally powerful moral and philosophical tone: both are learned men; both poor, and both willing to remain so; whilst the one can enjoy the society of his books, and the other advance the spiritual prosperity of his flock. Their differences are no less noticeable and instructive. The entire heart and mind of him

[1] Oxford. [2] Gone. [3] A short upper cloak.

[4] This alludes, we presume, to the connexion between alchemy and philosophy, which was formerly so close that the two were seldom found apart.

THE CLERK.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."

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who, apart from the sacred writings, presents the most perfect specimen of a Christian pastor that we possess, or that the imagination of man can conceive, is occupied by the care of his flock ; the Clerk's morality and philosophy by no means produce an equal abnegation of self—

> " Of *study* took *he* mostè care and heed : "

the first lives wholly for others ; the second, inferior only to him, spends no inconsiderable portion of his time and energies on himself. Yet even in so doing, how utterly divested is he of any sentiment of a selfish kind ! Though the " poore parson's " philosophy may be the nobler, yet still how noble is the Clerk's !

Aware of the high capacities God has implanted in him, he thinks it but his duty, as it is his pleasure, to develop them to the utmost ; and at the same time both these influences impel him to impart to his fellow-men whatever of value his studies have bequeathed to him. " Gladly would he learn, " says Chaucer, in the exquisite concluding line of the description, " and gladly teach."

This noblest of scholars was not alone in his love of learning for its own sake ; or in his determination to gratify his love at any worldly cost. There must have been many such scholars, when education was in the hands of teachers, like the Rector and Masters of the Faculty of Arts in the most distinguished of European universities, Paris ; who, in 1362, petitioned for the postponement of the hearing of a case in which they were interested, on the ground of the difficulty they experienced to find money to pay the procurators and advocates whom it was necessary to employ—they *whose profession it was to possess no wealth.* That a similar spirit prevailed in the English universities at the same time, Chaucer's character of the Clerk of Oxford may almost be considered to prove.

There are two passages of a very extraordinary kind in relation to the parson and the clerk, by Warton, which show but too clearly, how little the historian of poetry could sympathise with the highest class of poetical creations. He says of Chaucer's description of the first, that he shows in it " his good sense and good heart ;" and there ends his commendation : whilst of the second, in reference to these noble lines—

> " Not a word spake he morè than was need ;
> All that he spake, it was of high prudénce,
> And short and quick, and full of great senténce,"—

he writes," The Clerk's unwearied attention to logic had tinctured his conversation with much pedantic formality, and taught him

to speak on all subjects in a precise and sententious style." Is not this a fair specimen of what Swift calls the "art of sinking" in poetry? How differently Godwin has read the lines, may be inferred from the fact that he adduces them as one of the proofs of a very interesting theory; namely, that Chaucer, in the person of the Clerk, described his own mental characteristics.

We need hardly say that Godwin, in applying these lines to the poet, did not intend to call him a formal pedant. The theory to which we have alluded, is too interesting to be passed over without examination. Chaucer, as we have before stated, is himself one of the pilgrims who are journeying towards Canterbury. As he describes all his companions—their persons, habits, minds—he could scarcely avoid, without affectation, some allusions to himself. Most happily he gets over the difficulty. After the Prioress has told her tale, the Host looks about him to see who shall tell the next, when his eye falls on Chaucer, whom he thus addresses:—

"———— What man art thou? quod he;
Thou lookest as thou wouldest find a hare,
For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.
Approachè near, and look up merrily.
Now, 'ware you, sirs, and let this man have place.
He in the waist is shapen as well as I:
This were a poppet in an arme to embrace
For any woman, small, and fair of face.
He seemeth elvish by his countenance,
For unto no wight doth he dallïance."

The poet, however, has here described his personal features only; but in the Clerk of Oxford, we believe, and that belief is sanctioned by Godwin's high authority, he has revealed to us a most interesting glimpse of his literary habits and mind, as well as of a very important event in his history, of which we should otherwise have been ignorant. The love of "Aristotle and his philosophy" could not possibly apply more forcibly to the Clerk, than we know it did to Chaucer; and of the latter's love of reading, and his propensity to enjoy that solace in bed in his sleepless hours, when the books at "his bed's head" must have been found very convenient, he has himself expressly and repeatedly informed us. But the most striking proof of the connexion is, that Chaucer, as we have just stated, has put into the Clerk's mouth a record of one of the most interesting events of his (the poet's) life. "I will tell you a tale," says the Clerk to his fellow-pilgrims,

"——————— which that I
Learnèd at Padua of a worthy clerk,
* * * *
Francis Petrarch, the laureate poéte."

The tale referred to, is the wonderfully pathetic story of 'Grisilde,' which Petrarch translated from the 'Decameron' of Boccaccio.

Now we know that in 1373 Chaucer was sent on a mission to Genoa, and that it was about—and probably a little before—the same time, that Petrarch made the translation; facts that, taken in connection with the text, seem to us tolerably conclusive as to the truth of the incident. As a still further proof that the Clerk states a fact of the poet's biography, Godwin remarks, "Why did Chaucer choose to confess his obligation to Petrarch rather than to Boccaccio, from whose volume Petrarch confessedly translated it (and with which Chaucer was familiarly acquainted)? For this very natural reason—because he was eager to commemorate his interview with this venerable patriarch of Italian letters, and to record the pleasure he had reaped from his society. Chaucer could not do this more effectually than by mentioning his having heard from the lips of Petrarch, a tale which had been previously drawn up and delivered to the public by another."

Sir Harris Nicolas (in his 'Life' of the poet) considers this reasoning doubtful, on the ground that it is not *certain* that Chaucer was acquainted with the original Italian of Boccaccio; that there *may* have been a common Latin original of the tales to which Boccaccio, as well as Chaucer, was indebted; and lastly, that it may be *inferred* Chaucer was not acquainted with the Italian language, since he has not introduced any Italian quotations into his works, which at the same time abound in Latin and French words and phrases. Surely, this is questioning for questioning's sake: the first two objections are mere unsupported possibilities ranged against established facts; and as to the last, since Latin and French had been for centuries much more familiar to all readers and writers in England, than their own mother-tongue (the French had indeed become a part of the mother-tongue), there was perfect propriety in introducing the words and phrases from both if he so desired, whilst he would not have been even understood in similar introductions from Italian. We should consider, also, the circumstance that Chaucer was sent on *repeated* missions to Italy, as in itself a kind of evidence that he did understand the language in question; though it seems Sir Harris Nicolas rejects such conclusions, because there are instances of ambassadors who were similarly

ignorant. But were these the real men of business of the embassy, and were they sent again and again? It is no light consideration, in reviewing this and still weightier matters of the poet's history, to perceive that, whilst the more ornamental personages, the knights, lords, &c., of some nine of the embassies dispatched to the Continent within the space of a few years, were constantly changed, there is one man as constantly connected with the whole nine—no doubt the real diplomatic labourer—and that one is Chaucer. From Petrarch's lips, then, we are quite prepared to believe, with Godwin and the text of the 'Canterbury Tales,' did the poet hear the marvellous story; and as his biographer observes, the magic of a tale, perhaps the most pathetic that human fancy ever conceived, heard under the sacred roof of him in whom the genius of modern poetry seemed to be concentrated, must have been altogether a surprise, a feast, a complication of sentiment and pleasure, such as it has fallen to the lot of few mortals to partake. We may conclude this part of our subject by relating an anecdote illustrative of the effect of the tale on one of its readers. About the same time that Petrarch read it to Chaucer, he showed it to one of his Italian friends, a citizen of Padua. The latter attempted to read it aloud, but he had no sooner got into the incidents of the story than he was obliged to desist; his voice was choked by his emotions. He repeated the trial, but was quite unable to proceed.

In the Ellesmere Manuscript, the Clerk's surcoat, or "overest courtepy," with the hood, is of a dirty violet colour; his stockings, and the saddle and bridle on his "lean," miserable-looking horse, are of scarlet. He holds a book in his right hand, which is stretched out, as if he were descanting on its contents. Under his left arm he carries other books bound in red and blue. The painter has not overlooked the "hollow" face of the poor but high-minded Clerk.

In the "Originals and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales," Part II., Chaucer Society, 1875, Dr. Furnivall has printed Petrarch's Latin Tale of Griseldis, with its original, Boccaccio's Italian story.

Section V.

TRADE AND COMMERCE—AGRICULTURE.

If, in reference to the period of Chaucer, we exclude the higher aristocracy of England generally, whose occupations appear to have been, government, war, and intrigue—and also the inhabitants of the towns, who lived by the cultivation of trade, commerce, and the arts handicraft and mental — the remainder, forming the great bulk of the agricultural population, may be divided into four classes: the large landed proprietors, who lived upon and looked after their estates; the smaller proprietors or freemen, who generally possessed little patrimonies of their own, or otherwise rented farms from others; the villeins-regardant, or serfs, who belonged to the soil, but under such circumstances that, in Chaucer's time, they were fast rising to the position that would cause the soil to belong to them (our original copyholders); and lastly, the villeins in gross, or personal slaves, who,—joining in the movement of the former villein class, and often becoming villeins-regardant as a transition stage towards the grand goal, that of selling their labour to whom and wherever they pleased,—were rapidly losing their distinctive character of absolute slaves, and making their rights known to those who till now seem not to have dreamed they ever had any. The Wat Tyler insurrection in 1381 was but a phase of this movement on the part of the unenfranchised slaves, and one which must have led to deep and solemn reflection in Chaucer's mind, who had a personal as well as a public interest in the matter; since his patron and brother-in-law, the great John of Gaunt, was one of the nobles marked out by the populace for their especial vengeance, and whose palace of the Savoy was destroyed in consequence. That insurrection was put down; and King Richard II., faithless to all his promises, told the people who had shared in, or who would have benefited by it, that as rustics they had been and were, so in bondage they should remain; and both he and his parliament strove by severe laws to accomplish what he had

announced. But a mightier fiat than that of King, Lords, and Commons, had gone forth; and the movement progressed irresistibly. Before Chaucer died, he must have seen that his poor countrymen were in effect already free; and sure we are, that *he* must have rejoiced in their elevation, who knew so well what high intellect and lofty virtues were to be found among the poor—witness the "poore Parson," and the threadbare-coated Clerk, of whom we have spoken; witness the humble Ploughman, of whom we have yet to speak.

Of the four agricultural classes we have named, Chaucer furnishes us with a comprehensive group of examples. The wealthy landlords and their agents are illustrated in the Franklin, and the Reeve or Steward; the freemen, in the Miller and the Yeoman (before described); and the unemancipated, or transition classes, in the Ploughman, who appears to belong, or to have belonged, to the first, but to have risen, till there is little visible difference between his position and that of the "gentlemen" of "free-bore blood."

The student should, on this subject, consult Prof. Thorold Rogers's 'History of Agriculture and Prices in England,' Matthew Brown's 'Chaucer's England,' and the late Mr. Denton's 'England in the Fifteenth Century.'

THE FRANKLIN.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"To liven in delight was all his wone,
For he was Epicurus' owen son."

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THE FRANKLIN.

HE name of the class to which this luxurious, respectable old gentleman, this "Epicurus' owen son," belongs, is derived from the word *frank*, free; that is to say, the Franklin was one who held his lands immediately from the king, paying homage, but free from all feudal services or payments. And a person of considerable dignity and importance he must have been at and prior to the period of Chaucer. In Part II. of the 'Metrical Chronicle' of Robert Manning, of Brunne (A.D. 1338), the Franklin is placed in very high companionship indeed: that learned monk writes, there

> "Was mad an other statúte, that non erle, ne baroún,
> No other lord stoute, ne fraunkelyn of toun,
> Till holy kirk salle gyue tenement, rent, no lond," &c.

We need not, therefore, be surprised to find Chaucer's Franklin filling the distinguished offices of sheriff and knight of the shire; still less to find that he can afford to keep what, in modern parlance, might almost be called "open house." The dress of the Franklin, according to the Ellesmere manuscript, was a surcoat of red lined with blue, with bars or stripes of fringe or lace over it. He wore a small blue hat turned up, and black boots. For the rest, let Chaucer himself speak:

> "White was his beard as is the dayèsy.
> Of his complexïon he was sanguíne;
> Well lov'd he in the morn a sop in wine.
> To liven in delight was all his wone,[1]
> For he was Epicurus' owen son;
> That held opinïon that plain delight
> Was verily felicity perfite.
> A householder, and that a great, was he;
> Saint Julian he was in his country.
> His bread, his ale, was alway after one;[2]
> A better envíned[3] man was no where none.
> Withouten bak'd meat never was his house
> Of flesh and fish, and that so plenteous,
> It snowèd, in his house, of meat and drink,
> Of allè dainties that men couldè think.

[1] Custom. [2] Always alike, and of course, always good.
[3] That is to say, a man having a better store of *wine*.

After the sundry seasons of the year,
He changèd them at meat and at suppére.
Many a fat partridge had he in mew,
And many a bream, and many a luce in stew.[1]
Woe was his cook, but if his saucè were
Poignant and sharp, and ready all his gear.
His table dormant[2] in his hall alway,
Stood ready cover'd all the longè day.
At sessions there was he lord and sire.
Full often time he was knight of the shire.[3]
An an'lace,[4] and a gipciere,[5] all of silk,
Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.
A sheriff had he been, and a countóur[6];
Was no where such a worthy vavasour."

Warton says the Franklin's "impatience if his sauces were not sufficiently poignant, and every article of his dinner in due form and readiness, is touched with the hand of Pope or Boileau:" we apprehend the time is coming, when it is Pope or Boileau who will be honoured, by its being said, if with truth it can be, that they touch satire with the hand of Chaucer.

Saint Julian, to whom the poet has likened the Franklin, was a saint who enjoyed particular reputation as an admirable caterer for his votaries in the matters of good living, good lodgings, and, in short, good things of all kinds. In some of the old legends, Simon, the leper, at whose house our Saviour lodged in Bethany, is called "Julian the good herberow." In the 'Legend of Saint Julian,' a manuscript of the sixteenth century, in the Bodleian Library, occur the following as the concluding lines:—

"Therefore yet to this day they that over land wend,
They biddeth Saint Julian anon that good herberw he them send;
And Saint Julian's Pater-noster oft sayeth also,
For his father's soul, and his mother's that he them bring thereto."

Travellers, and their lodgings, indeed, appear to have enjoyed the saint's especial protection,—to have formed the principal objects of his care; for in the tale of Beryn he is invoked to

[1] Pike in fishpond.
[2] Never moved, fixed, as opposed to the usual movable boards on trestles.
[3] Member of Parliament, as Chaucer once was for Kent.
[4] A kind of knife or dagger, generally worn at the waist in Chaucer's time.
[5] Purse.
[6] Auditor.

revenge a traveller who had been treacherously used at the place where he had been staying.

The last two lines of Chaucer's description have caused his commentators much perplexity. Countour has been supposed to mean coroner, and Warton, in his 'History of Poetry,' adopts that reading, and illustrates it by remarking that it was an office "anciently executed by gentlemen of the greatest respect and property." The Chaucer MSS. read contour or *comptour*, and this last reading appears to us to explain its meaning. Compteur is the French word for an accountant or reckoner. Robert of Gloucester, speaking of the summoning of a hundred court by the constable of Gloucester castle, says,

> "He held this hundred mid great folk and honour,
> And Adam of Arderne was his chief contóur."

Chaucer's Franklin was probably, like Adam of Arderne, the "chief contour" or steward of the hundred to which he belonged, and officiated on all such great public occasions. The meaning of the word vavasour is *val-vasor*, under-vassal, one who held land, a chief noble, a vassal of the crown. The vavasours were the entire class of middling country folk, among whom there was "nowhere such a worthy" man as our Franklin.

Glancing for a moment at the residences of such men as the Franklin, at their domestic economy, and at their agricultural operations, we may observe that the manor-house of Chaucer's time was generally moated, had, according to its size, one or two court-yards, with gardens, fish-ponds, pigeon-houses, &c. Then there was a rabbit-warren, furnishing at once food and fur, and the woodland to supply the hearth with fuel. Of the land in the immediate vicinity, the best was of course reserved for the lord's own use, both pasture and arable; which was cultivated by his own personal servants, the lower class of villeins. The remainder was allotted out to the higher class of villeins; who rendered various services in return, as by assisting in the lord's agricultural operations, or following him to the camp when war threatened; or who paid him still more directly, by supplies for his table, or even by money. The produce of a manor was generally expended on the manor; when very abundant, some was exchanged with neighbouring lords. The persons engaged on such estates under the lord, appear to have been—the Reeve or steward, who guarded all the manorial privileges, kept the principal accounts both of the manor-house and the farm, and superintended the domestics; the bailiff, who had the management of all that related to the cultivation of the land; the head harvest-man, generally elected by the

tenantry, who ate at the lord's table, and had a horse in the lord's stable ; the plough-driver, who slept in the same building with the cattle ; to whom lastly may be added a host of shepherds, ploughmen, swineherds, carters, &c., down to the lowest of all, the ordinary labourers. And over these the lord, when he was such a one as Chaucer's Franklin, exercised what may be called a kind of affectionate despotism. No one upon his estate who was in health, wanted employ and ample maintenance ; none who were ill, failed to receive attentions and medicine, and generous and suitable food from his lady or other members of his family. It was necessary this system should be changed ; but we are now finding by painful experience that it was not necessary that *all* should be swept away ; not at least till some equivalent had been found for the better part. In the nineteenth century, alas ! these equivalents have yet to be discovered.

THE MILLER.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"A white coat and a blue hood wearèd he
A baggèpipè could he blow and sound.

At wrestling he would bear away the ram."

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THE MILLER.

SCARCELY had the good Knight told his noble story of 'Palamon and Arcite,' and the Host expressed his delight at the manner in which his scheme had been practically carried out, before

> "The Miller, that fordrunken[1] was all pale,
> So that unethe[2] upon his horse he sat,"

began to swear rudely that he too could tell a tale, in return for the Knight's. The Host, not a little indignant at this insubordinate conduct, but like a man whom experience in such matters has taught wisdom, gently endeavours to keep him within due bounds, and to persuade him to tell his tale at the proper time. But the Miller is obdurate, so the Host testily cries out—

> "Tell on a devil way,
> Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome;"

and the Miller begins. We shall have occasion again to return to this story; in the mean time, here is Chaucer's portrait of the relater:—

> "The Miller was a stout carl for the nónès;[3]
> Full big he was of brawn, and eke of bónès;
> That proved well, for over all there he came,[4]
> At wrestling he would bear away the ram.
> He was short shoulder'd, broad, a thickè gnarre,[5]
> There n'as no door that he n'ould heave off bar,
> Or break it, at a running, with his head.
> His beard as any sow, or fox, was red,
> And thereto broad, as though it were a spade.
> Upon the cop[6] right of his nose he had
> A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs,
> Red as the bristles of a sowès ears.
> His nosè-thirlès[7] blackè were, and wide.
> A sword and buckler bare he by his side.

[1] Very drunk.
[2] Uneasily.
[3] Nonce, occasion.
[4] Wherever he came.
[5] A gnarre is a hard knot in a tree; it seems here to illustrate the round, rough, and muscular character of the Miller's body.
[6] A Saxon word, signifying the top of anything.
[7] The old form of the word nostrils.

His mouth as wide was as a great furnáce,
He was a jangler,[1] and a goliardeis,
And that was most of sin, and harlotries.
Well could he stealen corn, and tollen thrice :[2]
And yet he had a thumb of gold, pardé.
A white coat and a blue hood wearèd he.
A baggèpipè could he blow and soun,
And therewithal he brought us out of town."

The wrestling-matches here alluded to, and the prize generally awarded to the conqueror, are genuine old English customs. About a hundred and sixty years before the period of the composition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' we find recorded the particulars of games of this kind held at Westminster, which were attended by serious consequences. Stow, in his 'Survey of London,' says, "I read that in the year 1222, and the 6th of King Henry III., on St. James's day, the citizens of London kept games of defence and wrestling, near to the hospital of Matilda, at St. Giles in the Fields, where they got the mastery of the men in the suburbs. The bailiff of Westminster, desiring to be revenged, proclaimed a game to be at Westminster upon Lammas day, whereunto the citizens repaired." When they had played awhile, the bailiff and the men of the suburbs, armed, treacherously fell upon the unsuspecting citizens, and drove them into the city ; and a formidable riot ensued, in which many houses were pulled down. The ringleaders in the riot were hanged.

The Miller, it appears, is a "goliardeis," an appellation derived, according to Tyrrwhitt, from a jovial sect, who borrowed it from Golias, the real or assumed name of a witty writer of the latter part of the twelfth century (he wrote several pieces in burlesque Latin rhyme); but the original source of the English word seems to be the French *goulis*, greedy, which is supported by a very pertinent passage in 'Piers Ploughman's Vision :'—

"Then grieved him a Goleardeis, a glutton of words."

With respect to the allusion in the text to the "thumb of gold," Mr. Tyrrwhitt says, if it refers, "as is most probable, to the old proverb, 'Every honest miller has a thumb of gold,' the passage may mean that our Miller, notwithstanding his thefts, was an honest miller, that is, as honest as his brethren :" to ourselves it appears much more probable that the line coming as it does, immediately after the notice of his thefts—

"And yet he had a thumb of gold, pardé,"

[1] Babbler.

[2] That is to say, cheat in his reckoning, by taking toll thrice over.

is neither a bit of satire directed at the Miller's own pretensions to honesty, nor at the pretensions of his brethren of the white coat generally; but refers simply to his skill, as showing how little need there was for his thefts. Mr. Yarrell says,—"It is well known that all the science and tact of a miller are directed so to regulate the machinery of his mill that the meal produced should be of the most valuable description that the operation of grinding will permit when peformed under the most advantageous circumstances. His profit or his loss, even his fortune or his ruin, depends upon the exact adjustment of all the various parts of the machinery in operation. The miller's ear is constantly directed to the note made by the running stone, in its circular course over the bed-stone; the exact parallelism of their two surfaces, indicated by a particular sound, being a matter of the first consequence; and his hand is constantly placed under the meal-spout, to ascertain by actual contact the character and qualities of the meal produced. The thumb, by a particular movement, spreads the sample over the fingers: the thumb is the gauge of the value of the produce; and hence have arisen the sayings of 'Worth a miller's thumb,' and 'An honest miller hath a golden thumb,' in reference to the amount of the profit that is the reward of his skill. By this incessant action of the miller's thumb, a peculiarity in its form is produced, which is said to resemble exactly the shape of the head of the fish constantly found in the mill-stream, and has obtained for it the name of the miller's thumb, which occurs in the comedy of 'Wit at several Weapons,' by Beaumont and Fletcher, Act v., scene 1; and also in Merrett's 'Pinax.' Although the improved machinery of the present time has diminished the necessity for the miller's skill in the mechanical department, the thumb is still constantly resorted to as the best test for the quality of flour."—*British Fishes.*

The spade-like beard continued till a comparatively recent period to be worn among our beard-loving ancestors.

Such is the Miller, who now interferes to tell his tale out of due course; and having obtained permission, precisely because it was useless to refuse it, he begins, "Now harkeneth all and some:—

> But first I make a protestatïoun
> That I am drunk, I know well by my soun!
> And therefore if that I mispeak or say,
> Wyte it[1] the ale of Southwark, I you pray."

[1] Blame for it. Our *twit* is from *A. S. ætwitan.*

THE REEVE.

THE Miller had proposed to tell a legend and a life both of a carpenter and of his spouse, etc., when he is himself interrupted by the Reeve ; and for a reason which the description in the prologue will make apparent :—

"The Reevè was a slender choleric man ;
His beard was shav'd as nigh as ever he can ;
His hair was by his earès round yshorn ;
His top was dockèd like a priest beforn.
Full longè were his leggès, and full lean,
All like a staff, there was no calf yseen.
Well could he keep a garner and a bin.
There was no auditor could on him win.
Well wist he by the drought, and by the rain,
The yielding of his seed and of his grain.
His lordès sheep, his neat,[1] and his dairý,
His swine, his horse, his store, and his poultrý,
Were wholly in this Reevè's góverning ;
And by his covenant gave he reckoning,
Since that his lord was twenty year of age :
There could no man bring him in árrearage.
There n'as bailiff, ne herd,[2] ne other hine,[3]
That he ne knew his sleight, and his covine :[4]
They were a-dread[5] of him as of the death.
His wonning[6] was full fair upon a heath,
With greenè trees yshadowed was his place.
He couldè better than his lord purchase.
Full rich he was ystorèd privily ;
His lord well could he pleasen subtilly,
To give, and lean[7] him of his owen good,
And have a thank, a coat, and eke a hood.
In youth he learnèd had a good mistere,[8]
He was a well good wright, *a carpenter*.
This Reevè sat upon a well good stot[9]
That was a pomelee[10] gray, and hightè Scot.

[1] Neat cattle. [2] Herdsman. [3] Hind.
[4] His secret contrivances or tricks. [5] Afraid. [6] Dwelling.
[7] Incline, or bend him to his (the Reeve's) own good or purposes.
[8] Mystery or trade.
[9] In the North this word is still used, but in connection with a bullock only. In Sir David Lyndsay, as well as in Chaucer, we find it applied to a horse. There is little doubt the word came from beyond the border, for in the next line we see the animal is "highte *Scot*."
[10] Dappled.

THE REEVE.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"The Reevè was a slender colerick man.
His beard was shave as nigh as ever he can.
His top was dockèd like a priest, beforn,
Full long were his leggès, and full lean,
All like a staff, there was no calf yseen."

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A long surcoat of blue upon he had ;
And by his side he bare a rusty blade.
Of Norfolk was this Reeve, of which I tell,
Beside a town men callen Baldèswell.
Tucked he was, as is a frere, about,
And ever he rode the hinderest of the rout."

The Miller's remark, however, soon brings him forward. The cautious, calculating reserved Reeve, stung by the and ticipated ridicule of the class to which he had once belonged forgets alike his reserve, his schemes, and his caution, and, amidst the ill-suppressed mirth of the pilgrims calls out,—

"Stint thy clappe,
Let be thy lewed drunken harlotry," etc.

But he has a man to deal with, whom nothing can move from his purpose, and who is still less likely to "stint" when he sees so much matter for malicious enjoyment before him. The tale the Miller tells is one of Chaucer's richest and broadest in ridicule of a carpenter, and the laugh at its conclusion is loud and long. The Reeve alone looks gloomy,—

"A little ire is in his heartè left."

But says he,—

———"Full well could I him quit,
With blearing of a proudè miller's eye,
If that me lustè[1] speak of ribaldry,
But I am old ; me list not play for age ;
Grass time is done, my fodder is now forage :[2]
My whitè top writeth mine oldè years.
Mine heart is all so moulded as mine hairs.

In a similar strain he continues for some time to pour forth his reflections (one very fine line we must not pass unnoticed,—

"We hoppen alway, while the world will pipe '),—

till the Host, who has a mortal dislike of "sermoning," calls out,—

[1] Please,

[2] "Fodder being a general name for meat given to cattle in winter, and of affinity with food applied to man and beasts, doth only signify meat. And so the sense is, my meat is forage, that is, my meat is such hard and old provision as is made for horses and cattle in winter."—*F. Thynne's Animadversions.*

"What amounteth all this wit?

* * *

Say forth thy tale, and tarry not the time.
Lo! here is Depford[1] and it is pass'd prime;
Lo! Greenèwich, there many a shrew is in;
It were all time thy talè to begin."

Thus admonished, the Reeve commences a story, which certainly does not spare, by reflection, the Miller, or fail to requite him in his own coin.

In the Ellesmere manuscript "the Reeve" presents us with an admirable portraiture of Chaucer's pilgrim. He is evidently as choleric as he is thin. He is represented closely shaved, his hair rounded about the ears like the "crop ears" of a later time, and docked at the top like a priest. He wears a blue garment, scarlet hood, and scarlet stockings; also a sword of enormous size. Warton's observations on this character are so just, apposite, and complete, that we cannot better conclude than by transcribing them:—"He was an officer of much greater trust and authority during the feudal times than at present. His attention to the care and custody of the manors, the produce of which was then kept in hand for furnishing his lord's table, perpetually employs his time, preys upon his thoughts, and makes him lean and choleric. He is the terror of bailiffs and hinds, and is remarkable for his circumspection, vigilance and subtlety. He is never in arrears, and no auditor is able to over-reach or detect him in accounts; yet he makes more commodious purchases for himself than for his master, without forfeiting the good will or bounty of the latter. Amidst these strokes of satire, Chaucer's genius for descriptive painting breaks forth in the simple and beautiful description of the Reeve's rural habitation,—

"'He had his wonning fair upon a heath;
With greene trees yshadow'd was his place.'"

[1] The spelling here is a proof, if any were needed, of the origin of the name Deptford—the deepe-ford.

THE PLOUGHMAN.

THIS industrious, simple hearted, charitable, and good man occupies but a small space in the text; the description is, like himself, humble and unobtrusive. The most interesting feature of his personal history is his connection with the "poore Parson," as that of his moral character is the benefit he appears to have thence derived. He is in spirit, as well as in blood, the Parson's

> "brother
> That had yled[1] of dung full many a fother[2]
> A truè swinker[3] and a good was he;
> Living in peace, and perfect charity.
> God loved he best with all his truè heart,
> At alle timès, though him gained or smart,
> And then his neighèbour right as himselve.
> He wouldè thresh, and thereto dyke, and delve,
> For Christè's sake, with every poorè wight,
> Withouten hire, if it lay in his might.
> His tithès payèd he full fair and well,
> Both of his owen swink,[4] and his cattêl.
> In a tabárd he rode upon a mare."

Of the state of the class represented among the pilgrims by the Ploughman, we possess but meagre information; though there is an undying sketch of one in Piers Ploughman with his wife at plough, and their babe laid on the field. It is evident from the text that he is not a mere ploughman in the sense we now attach to the words; being a man who has "cattle," and from whom "tithe" is expected. He was most probably one of that large class of emancipated villeins, who had risen by renting a small piece of land and by eking out the produce by occasional labour for other and wealthier men. The rental of land, at or about the period of Chaucer, presents some curious features as to the prices and quantities of land concerned.[5] We extract a few particulars from Sir John Cullum's 'History of Hawsted.' One rental in 1420 mentions 8 acres of arable land let at *6d.* an acre; another in 1421, thirty-eight acres at *9d.* an acre, and a garden at the old rent of *10s.* a year. From the same work we obtain an idea of the extent and

[1] Led, carried on to the land. [2] Or load. [3] Worker or labourer.
[4] That is to say, of the fruits of his *labour* as well as of his *cattle*.
[5] See Thorold Rogers's 'Hist. of Agriculture and Prices in England.'

nature of the produce of a piece of arable land in the manor of Hawstead, consisting of 157½ acres. This was cultivated in the proportion of fifty-seven acres of wheat and fifty-four and a half of oats, to twenty-four of barley and twenty-two of peas. The produce averaged somewhat less than eight bushels per acre. As to other matters, the land lying nearest to inhabited places was the best cultivated; the common pastures served as support for the "cattle," and the acorns and beech-mast of the woods for the hogs; whilst for their own living the labouring population relied little on luxuries and much on appetite, which no doubt was sufficiently sharpened by the continual labour they had to perform. During harvest, herrings, beer, and bread made of rye, barley, peas, and occasionally of beans, formed the chief part of the provisions that graced the husbandman's table. Messes of pottage and cheese also were not wanting. In ancient valuations, both in towns and in rural districts, we find mention made of stores of corn possessed by the inhabitants. It was the neglect of this precaution (generally carried into effect immediately after harvest), and the consequent improvidence that ensued, that often produced famines.

When wheat was sold at such low prices as to be within the reach of the poor, it was thought a great thing. This of course was only the case immediately after a very favourable harvest. In "Piers Ploughman" is recorded an instance of this kind; when even no beggar would "eat bread that in it beanes were." Implements at this period were simple, few in number, and inexpensive; for the user generally made them himself: an iron ploughshare, an axe, and a spade, formed the only articles which he was accustomed to purchase. The plough was drawn by oxen, which were so badly fed, that six of them were required for the purpose, and, after all, scarce half an acre was turned up as the result of a day's work. Such were some of the difficulties of husbandry in the olden time; and to these circumstances we probably owe not only the simplicity, but the little prominence given by Chaucer to his Ploughman.

We have already given Stow's explanation of the meaning of the word Tabard[1] (page 11). Mr. Cowden Clarke[2] says "Chaucer has dressed his Ploughman in a tabard, evidently to

[1] As the Ploughman tells no tale, he is unluckily not drawn for us by the illuminator of the Ellesmere MS. One spurious Ploughman's tale was first printed in 'Thnnye's Chaucer,' 2nd edition, 1542; another is in the Christchurch Oxford MS. of the 'Tales.'

[2] Mr. Clarke, in his 'Riches of Chaucer,' was the first who undertook the "labour of love" of endeavouring to unseal the poet's pages for the use of a wide class of readers by accentuating the lines.

convey the notion that it was a cast-off dress that had been given to him." We doubt this. Chaucer was in the habit of going straightforward to his object, and saying at once that which he wished to be understood. And what is there about the Ploughman to suppose he needed or would wear such a gift? No:—"this eternal blazon *would* not be." Stow says the tabard was once worn of "noblemen and others;" and, probably, there was a garment of a similar shape, without all the finery, but known by the same name, in use among the people, perhaps, after all our old and valued acquaintance, the smock-frock.

Section VI.

TRADE AND COMMERCE.—THE MERCHANT.

As the increase of towns, and the progress of commerce, were the immediate causes of that great event which so peculiarly distinguishes the thirteenth century—the rise of the Commons, or people of England, into political power; so that very power of course naturally re-acted upon the influences which had developed it: under its watchful care, commerce became less restricted by unnatural laws, charters for self-government were obtained, and powerful associations formed; to which the monarchs of the time could not refuse their sanction, although perhaps not altogether unaware of the bulwarks they were assisting to raise against their own arbitrary encroachments. So rapid, consequently, was the progress of the principal towns of England after the first shock of the Conquest had passed away, that within about three centuries of that period, our principal merchants rivalled in wealth and splendour, and in ostentatious but still genuine hospitality, the ancient barons of the country, to whose rank, indeed, their descendants sometimes successfully aspired. What with the wars, and what with the immense bands of retainers always attached to the feudal estates, the value of the latter was continually decreasing; hence arose pecuniary difficulties, then mortgages, and sometimes sales of the broad lands, to the thriving and prosperous merchants; who, as their assistance became more and more desiderated, grew more and more powerful and ambitious, and demanded higher rewards for their services. Thus Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, and lord chancellor to Richard II., was the son of a merchant only, and owed the first and most difficult steps of his advancement, to the loans which his father had advanced to the third Edward, for the prosecution of the wars in France. And eminently worthy of respect and honour were these princely merchants of the fourteenth century! Among the number were some of the most distinguished men of the time. There was John Philpot, who, in the second year of Richard II.'s

THE MERCHANT.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"high on horse he sat,
Upon his head a Flanders beaver hat."

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reign—when Mercer, a Scotchman, had fitted out a piratical fleet against the English—hired ships and a thousand soldiers at his own sole cost, and, putting to sea, attacked and took Mercer with all his prizes, and fifteen Spanish ships which he had drawn to his assistance. There was Henry Picard, vintner, or wine merchant, mayor of London, who entertained four kings at dinner, the year following that in which the battle of Poitiers had been fought. They were—Edward, king of England; John, king of France, his prisoner; David, king of Scots; and the King of Cyprus. "After dinner," says the old chronicler Stow, "the said Henry Picard kept his hall against all comers whatsoever, that were willing to play at dice and hazard. In like manner the Lady Margaret, his wife, did also keep her chamber to the same intent. The King of Cyprus, playing with Henry Picard in his hall, did win of him fifty marks; but Henry being very skilful in that art, altering his hand, did after win of the same king the same fifty marks and fifty marks more; which, when the same king began to take in ill part, although he dissembled the same, Henry said unto him, 'My lord and king, be not aggrieved; I covet not your gold, but your play; for I have not bid you hither that I might grieve you, but that, amongst other things, I might try your play;' and (then) gave him his money again, plentifully bestowing of his own amongst the retinue: besides he gave many rich gifts to the king and other nobles and knights which dined with him." There was also Sir William Walworth, who struck down Wat Tyler at the head of his men—an act which, however it may be questioned for its morality, was perhaps as daring an act as was ever committed. Lastly, there was the famous Sir Richard Whittington, who must have expended so vast a fortune in his charities, that we need not wonder the popular mind called in the aid of romance to explain the mode of its accumulation. Besides the erection and endowment of the magnificent almshouses, still existing; he rebuilt, at his own expense, the gaol of Newgate, the library of the Grey Friars, the hospital of Little St. Bartholomew, and a college near St. Paul's, called after his own name. These men were all merchants, and contemporaries of the great poet!

With this introduction, explanatory of the rank and position of the merchants generally of Chaucer's period, we introduce his individual portrait:—

> "A Merchant was there, with a forkèd beard;
> In mottèly, and high on horse he sat;
> Upon his head a Flandrish beaver hat,

His bootès claspèd fair and fetisly,[1]
His reasons spake he full solemnèly;
Sounding alwáy the increase of his winníng;
He would the sea were kept[2] for anything
Betwixen Middleburgh and Orèwell.
Well could he in exchanges shieldès[3] sell.
This worthy man full well his wit beset,[4]
There wistè no man that he was in debt;
So éstately was he of governance,
With his bargaíns, and with his chevisance.[5]
Forsooth he was a worthy man withal."

The "mottèly" dress is explained by the manuscript so often referred to; where we find the Merchant habited in a garment of a bright red colour, lined with blue, and figured with white and blue flowers; most probably the dress or livery of the company to which he belonged. In a beautifully illuminated initial letter of the charter granted by Henry VI., in 1444, to the Leather-sellers' Company, is a coloured representation of the king handing the parchment scroll to some of the members, whose dress is of the same colours, red and blue, as that of the Merchant in the manuscript. The incorporation of these great civic companies was, as we have before incidentally stated, a striking feature of the fourteenth century. Many of them had long existed previously as guilds and fraternities; but now they were remodelled, and obtained much more extensive powers of administering the affairs of their respective crafts. The goldsmiths, for instance, obtained the right of assaying metals; and the vintners that of gauging wines. A proof of the rapidity with which the commercial character now rose in public estimation, is furnished by the fact, that whilst in the reign of Edward III. there were but two earls and one bishop among the honorary members of the Merchant Tailors' Company, that number had increased by the following reign to four royal dukes, ten earls, ten barons, and five bishops. This sudden influx of royal and noble personages must be taken, however, we presume, as evidencing simply their consciousness of the extent of the new power, coupled with the desire to direct it to their own purposes, and not at all as evidencing any real sympathy with those pioneers of the future greatness of England. Those purposes were made sufficiently apparent when Richard, having resumed the city's charter, revoked its provisions, disannulled its liberties, and abrogated its laws, once more put forward, in

[1] Featly, or neatly.
[2] Guarded.
[3] French crowns, having on one side a shield.
[4] Employed.
[5] Agreements in borrowing money.

1382, his creature, Sir Nicholas Brember, as lord mayor. A strong opposition, however, was raised; and a new candidate, John of Northampton, was supported by the popular party; and so much excitement produced, that a riot took place, in which lives were lost. John of Northampton was seized and put in prison; and, it is said, one of his principal supporters, *Chaucer*, escaped the same fate, only by taking refuge in Zealand for a time; where he suffered much distress. But he too, after a time, returning, in hope to live in secret, was discovered, and thrown into the Tower; from which he was not liberated till he had made some disclosures concerning his former partisans. The nature of these disclosures, however, does not seem to have been at all of a dishonourable kind, for no one suffered by them. Thus states Godwin; but Sir Harris Nicolas certainly shows that the story as it stands, cannot possibly be true: on the other hand, the passages of Chaucer's Testament of Love, on which Godwin chiefly relies, do, it appears to us, show that there is truth of some kind in it.

Chaucer says of his Merchant,

> "He would the sea were kept for anything
> Betwixen Middleburgh and Orèwell;"

which Tyrrwhitt illustrates by the remark, "the old subsidy of tonnage and poundage" was given to the king for the safeguard and custody of the sea, 12 Edw. IV., c. 3; without any further explanation. We may add, then, that our readers have seen a specimen of the dangers to which merchant ships were liable during this period, in the circumstances connected with the piratical Scotchman, Mercer; and the consequent necessity for the seas being better "kept" from "Middleburgh" to "Orèwell;" between which places, doubtless, flowed one of the great streams of commercial intercourse. Middleburgh is still a well-known port of the island of Walcheren in the Netherlands, almost immediately opposite Harwich, beside which are the æstuaries of the rivers Stoure and Orwell. This spot was formerly known as the port of Orwell or Orewell; in effect, it was the port of the wealthy and thriving town of Ipswich, situated but a short distance up the last-named river. There are some interesting recollections connected with the Orwell. Near its mouth, a most important naval engagement took place between King Alfred and the Danes in 880. Along its waters sailed the Danes on several of their fearful plundering expeditions into the interior of the country: Ipswich was pillaged no less than three times by them between the years 991 and 1000. And, lastly, to come nearer to our own times, and to recollections of a more pleasant nature, along the banks of this river,

Gainsborough was accustomed to stray, and familiarize himself with those beautiful forms of rustic and landscape scenery, which he afterwards so beautifully reproduced for the enjoyment of his admiring countrymen.

As to the other principal features of the Merchant's portrait, as it exists in the illuminated manuscript,—"His bootès clasped fair and fetisly" are carefully shown; and look, as Shakspere has expressed it, "very smooth, like unto the sign of the leg." His steed is on the gallop; and he wears spurs with enormous rowels—a fashionable trait of the times, we presume. He looks in the prime of life; and his countenance is strikingly expressive of the man of business, who is

> "Sounding alwáy th' increase of his winníng."

The pilgrims generally seem to have been unfortunate in their wives, or else take great liberties with truth, as well as with their absent partners' characters. Thus the Merchant, at the conclusion of the story of Grisilde, struck by the contrast that it suggests to him, breaks out thus:

> "Weeping and wailing, care and other sorrow,
> I know enough, on even, and on morrow,"

and adds, in explanation,

> "I have a wife, the worstè that may be;
> For though the fiend to her ycouplèd were,
> She would him overmatch, I dare well swear."

But perhaps, after all, the subject was a standing joke in Chaucer's time as in our own; and enjoyed with the more zest in proportion as men felt themselves for the occasion the more free from the despotism of the fireside.

THE SHIPMAN.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"In a gowné of faldyng to the knee ;
A dagger hanging on a lace had he,
About his neck, undér his arm adown.

With many a tempest had his beard been shake."

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THE SHIPMAN.[1]

"A SHIPMAN was there, wonning[2] far by west,
For aught I wote he was of Dartèmouth.
He rode upon a rouncie,[3] as he couthe ;[4]
In a gown of falding[5] to the knee.
A dagger hanging on a lace had he
About his neck, under his arm adown.
The hot summér had made his hue all brown.
And certainly he was a good felláw.
Full many a draught of wine he haddé draw
From Bourdeaux ward, while that the chapman sleep :
Of nicè conscïence took he no keep.
If that he fought, and had the higher hand,
By water he sent them home to every land.[6]
But of his craft, to reckon well the tides,
His streamès and his dangers him besides,
His herbergh,[7] and his moon, his lodemanáge,[8]
There was none such from Hullè to Carthágе.
Hardy he was, and wise to undertake ;
With many a tempest had his beard been shake.
He knew well all the havens, as they were,
From Scotland to the Cape of Finisterre ;
And every creek in Bretagne and in Spain :
His barge yclepèd was the Magdelayne.

Commerce, about and a little prior to the period of Chaucer, made so great an advance, that the Shipman was doubtless an important, and, considering the dangers of his avocation and the variety of adventures he was constantly meeting with, a very interesting character. The magnet only became known in Europe towards the end of the twelfth century ; and did not,

[1] See Mr. P. Q. Karkeek's paper on the Shipman in *Essays on Chaucer*, Ch. Soc., pt. v., 1884.

[2] Dwelling.

[3] A common hackney horse.

[4] That is to say, as well as he was able.

[5] A kind of coarse cloth.

[6] Threw his captives overboard and let them drown.

[7] Harbourage.

[8] Even so late as the reign of George III. we find this word in use in the sense in which Chaucer applies it, namely, pilotage. See the Stat. Geo. III. c. 13. From the same idea, that of *leading*, the north star is called the *lode*-star, and the magnet the *load*stone.

it is supposed, get into familiar use, before the middle of the thirteenth. Chaucer, indeed, and his Scottish contemporary Barbour, are the first British writers who notice it. From the description, we perceive some of the channels in which the commerce of the fourteenth century flowed. English vessels passed to and fro between our country and France, Spain, and the places along the coast from "Scotland to Finisterre;" and, among the ports, Hull and Bourdeaux are particularly mentioned. A peculiarity of the mercantile navy at this period was its being frequently employed in warlike expeditions, and to that circumstance we owe the preservation of many particulars as to its extent When Henry III., in 1253, ordered all the vessels in England to be seized and employed against the rebel barons in Gascony, their number, according to Matthew Paris, was above a thousand, of which three hundred were large ships. When Edward III. was besieging Calais, he had with him 710 vessels belonging to English ports, with crews to the number of 14,151 persons. It may be interesting to see the relative proportion of the men and ships furnished by the different places in England, as it may be taken as a tolerably exact criterion of their relative maritime importance. London sent 25 ships with 662 men; Margate 15 with 160; Sandwich, 22 with 504; Dover, 16 with 336; Winchelsea, 21 with 596; Weymouth, 20 with 264; Newcastle, 17 with 414; Hull, 16 with 466; Grimsby, 11 with 171; Exmouth, 10 with 193; Dartmouth, 31 with 757; Plymouth, 26 with 603; Looe, 20 with 325; Fowey, 47 with 170; Bristol, 24 with 608; Shoreham, 20 with 329; Southampton, 21 with 572; Lyme, 16 with 482; Yarmouth, 43 with 1095; Gosport, 13 with 403; Harwich, 14 with 283; Ipswich, 12 with 239; and Boston 17 with 361. In the whole, there are scarcely twenty men to a ship, so that the vessels generally must have been small. Later in the same century, and during Chaucer's life-time, in (1360,) Edward issued a similar order to that before mentioned, for arresting all the vessels in his dominions; the largest were now directed to carry forty mariners, forty armed men, and sixty archers. Such a ship must have been of very respectable dimensions for its more peaceful and legitimate avocation. Of the kind of articles which formed the staple commodities of commerce during the period of the poet, we have a sufficiently exact account in the Records of the Exchequer for the year 1354, the oldest document we possess of the kind. From them it appears that the exports of that year were—31,651½ sacks of wool at 6*l.* per sack; 3036 cwt. of wool at 40*s.* per cwt.; 65 woolfels, at a total value of 21*s.* 8*d.*; hides to the value of 89*l.* 5*s.*; 4774½ pieces

of cloth, at 40*s.* each (of the same kind as the Shipman's "falding," perhaps); and 8061½ pieces of worsted stuff, at 16*s.* 8*d.* each: total value of the exports, 212,338*l.* 5*s.*, paying customs to the amount of 81,846*l.* 12*s.* 2*d.* From these figures it appears that wool constituted about thirteen-fourteenths of the entire exports of England. The imports consisted of 1831 pieces of fine cloth, at 6*l.* each; 397¾ cwt. of wax at 40*s.* per cwt.; 1829½ tuns of wine, at 40*s.* per tun; and linens, mercery, grocery, etc., to the value of 22,943*l.* 6*s.* 10*d.*: making a total value of 38,383*l.* 16*s.* 10*d.* The wines here referred to, and which appear to have formed the chief commodity with which our Shipman was concerned, were those of France, Spain, Greece and Syria.

For aught he knows, says the poet, the Shipman was of Dartmouth; a glance at the comparative importance of Dartmouth among the chief maritime places of England, as shown above, will explain this remark. Dartmouth contributed a more important total of ships and men than any other place in England, with the exception of Yarmouth. It was, no doubt, looked on through the country as peculiarly the seaman's home. Shipmen and Dartmouth, were ideas probably familiar to our countrymen in Chaucer's time, as sailors and Portsmouth now. This rank Dartmouth may have owed to the convenience of its harbour, which would accommodate 500 ships. As to Bourdeaux, where the Shipman has been accustomed to leave such a very equivocal reputation behind him, we may observe that it then belonged to the English, and that wine is still the staple export of the city. The touches of character by which Chaucer so happily marks all his creations are not wanting here;—the Shipman's riding as well as he could, and of course succeeding as well as your true seaman is generally accustomed to succeed on horseback;—the brown hue, and the beard that has been shaken by many a tempest,—all show how accurately Chaucer drew from the life—how he must ever have founded the characters he drew on those that he saw. And is not the Shipman of Chaucer the true sailor of our day?

Chaucer humorously observes,

> "If that he fought, and had the higher hand,
> By water he sent them home to every land."

By which we understand, with Mr. Cowden Clarke, that Chaucer means that the Shipman—the good felláw—*drowned* all his prisoners, and that that was his way of sending them home to every land! Human life was held cheap in Chaucer's day.

THE HABERDASHER, ETC.

IN this group of portraits, Chaucer has not attempted to give us any individuality; none knew better than himself, that in describing one of these "warm comfortable men," he described all; whilst by massing them, he brought out still more strongly the chief and common feature—their wealth.

"A Haberdasher and a Carpenter,
A Webbe,[1] a Dyer, and a Tapiser,[2]
Were with us eke, clothed in one livery,
Of a solémn and great fraternity.
Full fresh and new their gearè pickèd[3] was.
Their knivès were ychapèd[4] not with brass,
But all with silver wrought, full clean and well;—
Their girdles and their pouches every del.[5]
Well seemèd each of them a fair burgéss
To sitten in a guíldhall on the dais;
Every man, for the wisdom that he can,
Was shapely for to be an alderman.
For cattle[6] hadde they enough, and rent;
And eke their wivès would it well assent;
And elles certain had they been to blame:
It is right fair for to be clep'd Madáme;
And for to go to vigils[7] all before,
And have a mantle royally ybore."

The old Saxon custom of frank pledge, is supposed to have been the germ of the guilds or companies; which, with the progress of trade and commerce, were developed into associations of great power and influence; at once aiding to preserve whatever freedom and prosperity might have been already acquired by the inhabitants of our towns, and enabling them to go steadily on enhancing both, till what is now the mightiest power in the state was fairly established, namely, the power of the middle classes. In London, the oldest of these companies was that to which Chaucer's Webbe belongs, the Weavers; and an admirable foundation they began upon, if, according to their motto, they sought to "weave truth with trust."

We possess a record in connection with them which is

[1] Weaver. [2] Maker of tapestry. [3] Picked; spruce.
[4] Furnished; mounted.
[5] *Every del*, every part, or every bit. [6] Chattels.
[7] The eves of festivals: see page 158.

interesting in several points of view. We allude to the particulars of a case brought before the Justices Itinerant sitting at the Tower of London, in the reign of Edward II. On this occasion, "the weavers were required to show, by what authority they at this time claimed to have their guild in the city, and by virtue of the same guild to have yearly the right of electing from amongst themselves bailiffs and ministers; and the same so elected to take and swear in faithfully to execute their offices before the mayor of London? By what right also they claimed to hold their courts from week to week of all that pertained to their guild; and that none should intermeddle with their ministers in London, Southwark, or the parts adjacent, unless by their own permission, or that it were done by one of the guild; and that persons of the same guild should not be impleaded by others of matters concerning the mystery, except in the courts of the guild, or be elsewhere accused and answered? Why none might have working implements in their possession, unless the same were testified to be good and honest; and that all of the mystery should be forced to contribute to the king's ferme? Why no stranger was to be admitted as a manufacturer amongst them without producing letters testimonial of good conduct, and the reasons of his coming? Why the working implements of such of the mystery as were in arrears of their fermes, might be distrained by the bailiffs of the guild? . . . . It was further demanded why, if any one manufactured *cloth of Candlewick Street*, he ought to be overlooked by the bailiffs of the guild; whether or not his work was bad, and to the damage of the people; and if so, that it should be proved before the mayor of London, and the offender fined in half a mark; and moreover that such workmen should be brought before the bailiffs of the guild according to the Constitutions; and whatever cloth, or piece of cloth, should be found to be of Spanish mixed with English wool, contrary to proper usage, might be adjudged to be burnt? . . . . Why those of the guild might sell without control in London all things belonging to the mystery? And, lastly, why none were allowed to work between Christmas and the Purification, or at night by candle-light, or at other times proscribed?"[1] The weavers pleaded in answer a charter of Edward I., in which were recited charters of Henry I. and Henry II.; but the jury decided in a great measure against them with regard to the privileges claimed, and declared that the business was managed by the weavers "to their own profit, and the common hurt of the people."

[1] Herbert's Livery Companies, vol. i. p. 18.

Whilst the Weavers' Company, however, was the oldest, that of the Haberdashers appears to have been in Chaucer's time the most important of all the metropolitan trades associations. The haberdashers were originally a branch of the mercers; and dealt, like them, in small wares. Lydgate, in his well-known ballad of 'Lykpenny's Adventures in London,' places their stalls in the 'Mercery,' at Cheap. About the time of Chaucer, they divided into two fraternities, dedicated respectively to St. Catherine and St. Nicholas; one branch consisting of the hatters or hurriers; and the other of the dealers in miscellaneous articles, who were also called milliners, from their importing Milan goods for sale, such as brooches, aiglets, spurs, glasses, etc. Pins formed an important article of the haberdashery trade at this period, having not long superseded the points or skewers made of thorns, by which ladies were previously obliged to fasten their garments.

The other trades referred to by Chaucer need but slight comment. The tools of a carpenter at Colchester consisted merely of a broad axe, value five pence; another axe, three pence; an adze, two pence; a square, one penny; a navegor (probably a spokeshave), one penny: making the total value of his implements, one shilling. A carpenter of the present day, would be puzzled to perform all the variety of operations required of him with such tools only: *his* chest is a somewhat expensive affair. The Dyers' Company was one that possessed the privilege of keeping swans on the Thames. Some idea of the respective standing of these companies as compared with each other, and with the remainder of the civic bodies, is afforded by an examination of the state of the municipal representation, about the time that Chaucer wrote. The number of companies then sending members to the common council of London, was 48; among which, the grocers, mercers, drapers, fishmongers, goldsmiths, and vintners, were entitled to send six members each; the haberdashers and hurriers, saddlers, weavers, tapisers or tapestry makers, and barbers, four each; the joiners or carpenters, two; whilst the dyers' company sent none. The twelve great companies had not then attained their pre-eminence.

There were many picturesque features connected with civic life, and the class of men from whom Chaucer has selected his haberdasher and other tradesmen, which we should be glad to dwell upon, did our space permit; such as the internal organization of the companies; and the peculiarities of their government under the control of the Masters and Wardens, as the chief officers were called—who had the management of all matters relating to the binding of apprentices, admission of

freemen, preservation of the rights and privileges of the craft, detecting frauds and fraudulent members in connection with their respective arts and mysteries, making sumptuary laws, and admonishing or even punishing those who came shabbily dressed to the hall, arranging the elections for the common council, organizing the company's military resources, and lastly, taxing the company when they could not resist the sovereign's mandate to send him a certain sum of money, or summoning up all their heroism for resistance, when all parties were determined to decline the honour conferred upon them, of relieving the necessities of the crown. The election of the officers, who had such onerous duties to perform, was a solemn and magnificent business, with most if not all of the companies ; and took place on different days for the different fraternities. Each went then in the morning to the church of its favourite saint ; the whole of the members, male and female, habited in their rich and picturesque costumes, accompanied by hosts of clerks and priests, in their copes and surplices, singing ; and by the entire official body of the corporation (the mayor and aldermen conspicuous by their glowing scarlet robes), whilst, scattered all over the line of procession, appeared tall waxen tapers blazing away from amidst their "costly garnishments." Afterwards they proceeded in the same state to the hall of the company ; where one of the most luxurious dinners that art could devise, epicureanism enjoy, and wealth pay for, was prepared, and at once discussed, as is the English wont, before proceeding to business. Dinner over, the master and wardens going out of office, entered with garlands on their heads, preceded by minstrels playing ; and after a little pretty coquetry as to whose heads among the assistants of the company those same garlands would fit, it was always found that the very men previously determined upon were the right ones. The new officers then took the oaths. A cup was brought in with great ceremony, from which the old officers drank to the health of the new ; who, donning the garland, were enthusiastically welcomed by the whole fraternity, as its proper governors and guardians for the ensuing year.

We learn from the poet, that the aldermanic rank was the great object of aspiration with London's citizens. The qualifications required for persons elected as aldermen were, a certain amount of personal property, and of rent from landed property. According to Stow, it was necessary also that the person proposed for alderman should be without deformity in body, wise and discreet in mind, wealthy, honourable, faithful, free, and of no base or servile condition ; that no disgrace which might happen to him on account of his birth, might thence redound on the rest of the aldermen or the whole city. There seems indeed every reason

to suppose, that the title and person of an alderman, were as yet looked upon with high respect, and that its old baronial dignity was far from being forgotten. Thus, about 1350, Stow says the ancient and honourable custom with regard to the burial of aldermen was still observed ; and he gives a case in point :— "In the church where an alderman was to be buried, one armed with his arms, bearing in his hand a standard on a horse with trappings, carried aloft his shield, helmet, and his other arms with the standard, as the manner yet is of burying the lord barons."

It appears from the text that aldermen's wives were honoured with the title of Madame ; and that they took precedence in attending vigils, and of course on other public occasions. Speght observes, "It was the manner in times past, upon festival eves, called vigils, for parishioners to meet in their church-houses, and there to have a drinking fit for the time. There they used to end many quarrels between neighbour and neighbour ; hither came the wives in comely manner ; and they which were of the better sort, had their mantles carried with them, as well for show, as to keep them from cold at the tables. These mantles also many did use in the church, at morrow-masses, and other times."

None of Chaucer's five City Liverymen is pictured in the Ellesmere MS., as no one tells a tale.

THE COOK'S TALE OF THE PRENTICE.

" PRENTICE dwell'd whilom in our city,
And of a craft of Victuallers was he.
Gaillard[1] he was, as goldfinch in the shaw;[2]
Brown as a berry, and a propér felláw;
With lockès black, and combed full fetisly.
Dancen he could so well and prettily
That he was clepèd Perkin Revelour.[3]
He was as full of love and paramour,
As is the honeycomb of honey sweet:
Well were the wenchè that him mightè meet.
At every bridal would he sing and hop;
He loved bet[4] the tavern than the shop;
For when there any riding[5] was in Cheap,
Out of the shoppè thither would he leap;
Till that he haddè all that sight yseen,
And dancèd well, he would not come again.
And gathered him a meinie[6] of his sort,
To hop and sing, and maken such disport;
And there they setten steven[7] for to meet,
To playen at the dice in such a street.
For in the town ne was there no prentíce
That fairer couldè cast a pair of dice
Than Perkin could; and thereto he was free
Of his dispence, in place of privity;[8]
That found his master well in his chaffare;[9]
For often time he found his box full bare."

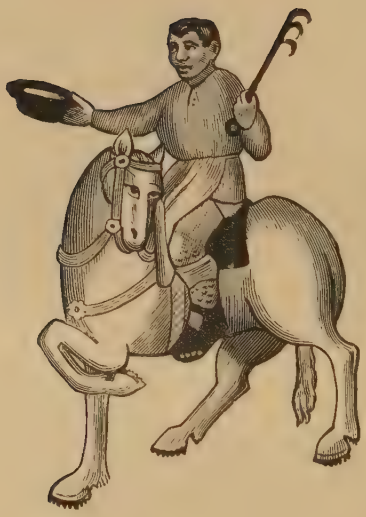
We may take it for granted, that the Cook has been too severe in this description of one of ancient London's bold prentices—perhaps through having in his own shop a particularly bad specimen. It is certain that the far-famed integrity of our chief men of trade must have been based generally upon their training as apprentices; which, however unable to prevent habits of independent thinking and acting, or even of occasional outbreaks of riot and licentiousness, must have sufficed to induce those principles of pecuniary rectitude, which were and are indispensable to commercial success. Stow says, no one was made apprentice, or at least admitted into the liberty

[1] Brisk. [2] Grove. [3] Reveller. [4] Better.
[5] Tourney, joust. [6] *Company*. [7] Made an appointment.
[8] In private, where his expenditure would not be noticed.
[9] Merchandise.

of the city, unless he were known to be of a gentleman-like condition ; or if, after he had been made free, it came "to be shown that he was of servile condition, for that very thing he lost the freedom of the city." About the period when Chaucer is supposed to have been writing the 'Canterbury Tales' (1386), it was ordered that in the taking of apprentices, and also in the admission of freemen, that ancient custom should be observed thenceforward.

All matters relating to the determination of quarrels between master and apprentice, and the redress or punishment these quarrels frequently involved, were under the cognizance of the officers of the respective companies. Here is an illustration of the working of the system when it was desired to punish just such a prentice as that Chaucer describes ; one who had been caught in some *faux pas* connected with "love and paramour ;" and who, like Chaucer's, was too formidable to be dealt with in any but a very careful manner. Two frocks were made, like those commonly worn by porters, and two hoods to match each, covering the whole face and head, with the exception of the eyes and mouth. The next court-day, two "tall men" put on the frocks and hoods ; and lay quiet, while the unsuspicious John Rolls was called into the parlour of the company's court-room ; immediately after, came in the mysterious personages in the hoods and frocks, with two pennyworth of birchen rods in their hands ; and there, in the presence of the master and wardens, "withouten any words speaking, they pulled off the doublet and shirt of the said John Rolls, and there upon him (being naked) they spent all the said rods, for his said unthrifty demeanour."

On apprentices and early London life, the reader should consult the late Mr. Riley's 'Memorials of London and London Life in the XIII., XIV. and XV. Centuries,' and his edition of the *Liber Albus*, either in the original or its translation.



THE COOK.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"Well could he know a draught of London ale.
He couldè roastè, seethè, broil, and fry.

But great harm was it, as it seemèd me,
That on his shin a mormal haddè he."

[*Page* 161.

THE COOK.

THE next character that we shall introduce to our readers is the Cook; and that he may be received with due respect, we prefix a few notices illustrative of his social importance in this country from a very early period. These notices must be necessarily indirect, as referring rather to his vocation than to him. Of the Cook, history says little; of the banquets set forth by his skill before the highest and mightiest of the land, and on the most interesting and eventful occasions, it furnishes, on the contrary, many particulars not unworthy of more detail than our space or our object will here admit of. The *art* of cookery in this country may be dated from the Norman conquest; our Saxon ancestors appear to have distinguished themselves for the excess rather than for the quality of their food; whilst the Normans, as William of Malmesbury expressly states, were delicate in the choice of meats and drinks, seldom exceeded the bounds of temperance, and, whilst living less expensively, lived also with more elegance. John of Salisbury mentions that he was present at a great entertainment where there were served up the choicest luxuries of Babylon and Constantinople, of Palestine and Alexandria, of Tripoli, Syria, and Phœnicia. These delicacies of course could only be obtained at a great expenditure; and must have required cooks capable of doing them justice. Such *artistes* were so very highly esteemed, that estates were granted them to be held by the tenure of dressing a particular dish. One of the most striking evidences of the magnificence of the feasts of the Norman court, is daily before our eyes, in that finest of European halls, the one at Westminster; which, we are told by Stow, was built by William Rufus for his dining-room. As we approach nearer to the period of the 'Canterbury Tales,' we find the love of display, or of hospitality, or of good living, or perhaps of all combined, more and more apparent in the banquets of the court, and of many of the principal nobles of the country. At the marriage feast of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, in 1243, thirty thousand dishes were served up; and upon a similar occasion, the marriage of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward III., thirty courses were included in the bill of fare.[1] But such enjoyments, if enjoyments they can

[1] See some later bills of fare in the Early English Text Society's 'Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery Books.' See also *Liber Cure Cocorum*, 'The Forme of Cury,' 'The Baker's Book,' etc.

be called, were no longer confined to the king or his nobles, or even to the lesser gentry of the country ; for, in the seventeenth year of Edward's reign, rules were established, forbidding any *common* man from having *dainty dishes* at his table, or costly drink. Cookery had indeed become a most complicated and artificial system, as the details we possess clearly prove ; and the Cook, himself, a person of sufficient importance to be introduced as one of the pilgrims to Canterbury. Here is Chaucer's description of him :—

"A Cook they hadden with them for the nones,[1]
To boilè chickens and the marrow bones,
And poudre marchant tart,[2] and galingale[3].
Well could he know a draught of London ale.
He couldè roastè, seethè, broil, and fry,
Maken mortrewès, and well bake a pie ;
(But great harm was it, as it thoughtè me,
That on his shin a mormal[4] haddè he ;)
For blanc-manger he madè with the best."

In the dishes here enumerated we have doubtless an epitome of the taste of the middle, perhaps also of the higher classes, of the period, in cookery. Mortrewès, we find from a printed MS. of the Royal Society on 'Ancient Cookery,' consisted of pork or other meat brayed in a mortar, (in the French, *une mortreuse*, and hence the name), mixed with milk, eggs, spices, etc., and coloured very deep with saffron. As to the blanc-manger, for which it seems the Cook was particularly famous, we need only say that the following recipe for making it, which we have found in a curious little volume in the British Museum bearing the title of 'A Proper new Booke of Cookery,' and dated 1575, will, we presume, be new to the culinary artists of the present day :—"Take a capon and cut out the braune of him *alive*, and parboyle the braune tyll the flesh come from the boone, and then dry him as dry as you can, in a fayre clothe ; then take a payre of cardes, and card him as small as possible ; and then take a pottell of milke, and a pottell of creame, and halfe a pound of rye flower, and your carded brawen of the capon, and put all into a panne, and styr it altogether, and set it upon the fyre, and when it beginneth to boyle put therto halfe a pound of beaten sugar, and a saucer full of roose water, and so let it boyle tyll it be very thycke ; then put it into a charger till it be colde," etc. As it is remarked, that our Cook is a thorough judge of London ale, it should

[1] For the occasion.
[2] A sharp kind of flavouring powder.
[3] Sweet cypress.
[4] Gangrene.

seem that the metropolitan breweries were in particular esteem; and the supposition is borne out by the circumstance mentioned by Tyrrwhitt, in his note on this passage, in his edition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' that in the accounts of the feast given by Archbishop Warham in 1504, London ale was then priced 5*s*. a barrel more than that of Kent.

We should fear the Cook has not much enjoyed, even if he has at all listened to, the glowing poetry of the Knight's tale; but the very free stories told by the Miller and the Reeve, which immediately follow, are evidently greatly to his taste: the latter, indeed, has scarcely finished, before he marked his approval very significantly—

"He clawed [or clapped] him on the back;"

and immediately offers, unasked, to tell a tale of

"A little jape that fell in our city."

Some pleasant bantering now ensues between the Host and the Cook. The Host accedes to the offer.

"Now tell on, Roger, and look that it be good;
For many a *pasty* hast thou letten blood,
And many a Jack of Dover[1] hast thou sold
That hath been twiès hot and twiès cold;
Of many a pilgrim hast thou Christè's curse,
For thy parsléy they faren yet the worse,
That they have eaten with the stubble-goose;
For in thy shop is many a fliè loose.
Now tell on, gentle Roger, by thy name;
But yet, I pray thee, be not wrath for game;
A man may say full sooth in game and play.
Thou say'st full sooth, quoth Roger, by my fay.
But sooth play *quade* play,[2] as the Fleming saith;
And therefore, Harry Bailly, by thy faith,
Be thou not wroth, ere we departen here,
Though that my tale be of an hosteler."

The tale begun by the Cook, but left unfinished, as though the mental exertion was too much for one of his habits, relates to a dissolute apprentice, of whom we learn little more than the character which we have already transcribed.

The pilgrims continue their journey; the tales, now of the broadest humour, now of the deepest pathos, follow in regular

[1] Pie.

[2] Bad play. Mr. Tyrrwhitt, on the strength of a single manuscript, spoils the line by giving *two* Flemish words—sooth play, *quade spel*, or bad play.

succession; but intellectual enjoyments alone are far from satisfactory to the Cook. He accordingly applies himself to a more accustomed, and, to him, more substantial pleasure: what this is, the ensuing extracts will show. At the conclusion of the Nun's Priest's tale, the Host looking back, sees the Cook fast asleep upon his horse:—

"Then 'gan our Hostè for to jape and play;
And saide, Sirs, what! Dun is in the mire.
Is there no man for prayere ne for hire
That will awake our fellow all behind?
A thief him might full lightly rob and bind.[1]
See, how he nappeth, see, for Goddès bones!
That he will fallè from his horse at ones:
Is that a cook of London, with mischance?
Do him come forth; he knoweth his penánce;
For he shall tell a talè, by my fay,
Although it be not worth a bottle hay.[2]
Awake, thou Cook, sit up! God give thee sorrow!
What aileth thee to sleepen by the morrow?
Hast thou had fleas all night, or art thou drunk?"

He is awakened, looking "full pale," and excuses himself by saying,

"—there is fall on me such heaviness,
N'ot I nat why,[3] that me were liever sleep,
Than the best gallon wine that is in Cheap."

The Host has determined that he shall now tell a tale by way of penance; but the Manciple offers to undertake that task for him, saying,

"See how he gapeth, lo, this drunken wight,
As though he would us swallow ánon right!
Hold close thy mouth, man, by thy father kin!
The devil of hellè set his foot therein!
Thy cursèd breath infecten will us all.
Fye, stinking swine! foul may thee fall.
Ah! taketh heed, Sirs, of this lusty man.
Now, sweetè Sir, will ye joust at the fan?
Thereto, me thinks, ye be right well yshape."

It is but too true,—the Cook is drunk; and at last, vexed by the jibes of the Manciple, and his own inability to answer him

[1] The pilgrims were in Blean Forest, close to Canterbury, which robbers haunted.

[2] Bundle of hay.

[3] Nor know I why.

in his present state, "he 'gan nod fast," and fell from his horse:

> "Whereas he lay, till that men him up-took:
> This was a fair chevachie[1] of a cook!
> Alas! that he n'ad held him by his ladle!
> And ere that he again were in his saddle,
> There was great shoving bothè to and fro,
> To lift him up, and muchel care and woe."

The humorous Host now reminds the Manciple that the Cook, another day, will be revenged for this. "I mean," he says,

> "He speaken will of smallè things,
> As for to pinchen at thy reckonings,
> That were not honest, if it came to proof."

The Manciple, as an officer who had the care of purchasing victuals for an inn of court, might have had transactions with the Cook not very creditable. He is frightened, at all events,—

> "I will not wrath him, all so may I thrive;"

and, with admirable judgment, determines how to make peace:

> "I have here in a gourd
> A draught of wine, yea, of a ripè grape;
> And right anon ye shall see a good jape.
> This Cook shall drinkè thereof, if I may;
> Up' paine of death, he will not say me nay.
> And certainly, to tellen as it was,
> Of this vessél the Cook drank fast (alas!
> What needeth it?—he drank enough before)."

This was medicine after Harry Bailly's own heart; who began

> "to laughen wondrous loud,
> And said, 'I see well it is necessáry
> Where that we go, good drink with us to carry;
> For that will turnen rancour and disease
> To accord and love, and many a wrong appease.
> O thou Bacchus! yblessed be thy name,
> That so canst turnen earnest into game!
> Worship and thanks be to thy deity.'"

But the Host remembers he is getting somewhat into the heroics. So he abruptly concludes by observing,

> "Of that mattére ye get no more from me."

[1] Chivalric expedition.

We have seen that the Cook kept a shop in the metropolis; but *where* we are not informed. In the time of Henry II., a favourite place for such savoury establishments was the banks of the Thames, in the neighbourhood of London Bridge.

"There is in London," says Becket's Secretary, Fitz-Stephen, "upon the river's bank, a public place of cookery, between the ships laden with wine, and the wines laid up in cellars to be sold. There ye may call for any dish of meat, roast, fried, or sodden; fish, both small and great; ordinary flesh for the poorer sort, and more dainty for the rich, as venison and fowl. If friends come on a sudden, wearied with travel, to a citizen's house, and they be loth to wait for curious preparations and dressings of fresh meat, the servants give them water to wash, and bread to stay their stomach, and in the mean time go to the water side, where all things are at hand answerable for their desire. Whatsoever multitude either of soldiers or other strangers enter into the city at any hour, day or night, or else are about to depart, they may turn in, bait there, and refresh themselves to their content, and so avoid long fasting, and not go away without their dinner. If any desire to fit their dainty tooth, they need not to long for the *accipenser* or any other bird; no, not the rare Godwit of Ionia. This public victualling place is very convenient, and belongs to the city."[1]

In the Ellesmere MS. the bare-legged and bare-headed Cook has in his right hand his black hat, in his left the three-hooked prong with which he pulls his joints out of the pot. On his knee and leg are the mormals, dead-evils or sores, which Chaucer names.

[1] Stow's translation.

THE WIFE OF BATH.

(FROM THE ELLESMERE MS.)

"Wympled full well, and on hir head a hat . . .
A foot-mantél about her hippès large,
And on hir feet a pair of spurrès sharpe.

Of remedies of love, she knew perchance,
For of that art she knew the oldè dance."

[*Page* 167.

THE WIFE OF BATH.

THE masculine character of "this fair but not bashful pilgrim," as Mr. Todd calls the Wife of Bath, is happily shown by the artist of the drawing in the Ellesmere manuscript, who represents her, like the Prioress and the Nun, on horseback; but not, like them, who, are ladies, riding in the modern way. But the Prioress rides on the off (or right) side of her horse. She is astride her horse, like a man. At the same time the artist has remembered the Wife *was* fair, and has accordingly represented her with a very winning countenance, which is advantageously set off by her remarkably large and broad black hat. Her wimple of kerchiefs is not unlike what we should call a mob-cap. Her fote-mantel, or outer petticoat, is blue, and is divided into baggy trowser-like continuations. Her red gown is bound round the hips by a golden girdle, from which it falls over her feet, so as to hide the scarlet "hosen." One of her spurs alone is there visible. The stirrup of her saddle is gilded,[1] and she holds in her hand a whip. From such a picture our readers will expect an original of some wealth and consequence; and the Wife of Bath, as Chaucer has described her, will not disappoint them:

"A good Wife was there of besidè Bath;
But she was somdel deaf, and that was scathe[2];
Of cloth-making she haddè such a haunt,[3]
She passèd them of Ipres and of Ghent.
In all the parish, wife ne was there none,
That to the off'ring before her should gone;
And if there did, certain so wroth was she,
That she was then out of all charity.
Her coverchiefs weren full fine of ground,
I durstè swear they weigheden ten pound,
That on a Sunday were upon her head.
Her hosen weren of fine scarlet red,
Full strait ytied, and shoes full moist[4] and new.
Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue.
She was a worthy woman all her live;
Husbands at churchè-door she had had five,
Withouten other company in youth;
But thereof needeth not to speak as nouthe.[5]

[1] See previous note, p. 33. [2] Hurtful or bad. [3] Custom.
[4] Fresh, supple. In the Manciple's prologue we have the word used in a similar sense to distinguish fresh from old ale.
[5] Now.

And thriès had she been at J'rusalem.
She haddè passèd many a strangè stream.
At Romè she had been, and at Bologne,
In Galice at St. James, and at Cologne;
She couldè[1] much of wandering by the way.
Goat-toothèd was she soothly for to say.
Upon an ambler easily she sat,
Wimpled full well,[2] and on her head a hat,
As broad as is a buckler or a targe.
A foot-mantél[3] about her hippès large;
And on her feet a pair of spurrès sharp.
In fellowship well could she laugh and carp.
Of remedies of love she knew perchance,
For of that art she knew the oldè dance."

Bath, we need scarcely observe, was formerly very famous for its cloth manufacture. The cloth chiefly made in England at this early period was of a coarse kind, which was produced in sufficient quantity to export: the finer cloths it was usual to import, chiefly from Flanders. In 1261 an attempt was made by Henry III. to prevent the exportation of English wool, and to cause cloth of English manufacture alone to be used in this country, but with little success. Soon after a scarcity of woad for the purposes of dyeing occurred, and the unusual spectacle of persons of rank and wealth dressed in cloth of the natural colour of the wool, was seen about the streets of our large towns. The great baron, Simon de Montfort, was an admirer of this simplicity in dress, and was accustomed to maintain that foreign commerce was unnecessary. His conqueror, Edward I., appears to have had similar views, and to have adopted very vexatious modes of carrying them into effect; such, for instance, as issuing an order that all foreign merchants should sell their goods within forty days after their arrival.

In Chaucer's lifetime, Edward III. made an equally petty and annoying regulation, when he insisted upon a prescribed measure being adopted for all foreign cloths wherever made, and directed his "aulnagers" to seize for his use all those that should be found of different dimensions. From the little trait of the Wife's character given in the lines referring to her want of charity, if any of her female neighbours ventured to take precedence in going to "offerings" or (no doubt) elsewhere, we may be sure the Wife of Bath would look with no very favourable eyes on these foreign interlopers; indebted though she

[1] Knew.
[2] Well covered about the neck with her wimple.
[3] See the cut. It is the only known authority for what a foot-mantle was.

was, in common with all of her trade, to a couple of foreigners, for the great extension of the English woollen manufacture which took place in the early part of the fourteenth century. Edward III. having made most advantageous offers to foreign cloth-workers and others, two weavers from Brabant came over in 1331, and settled at York. By their superior skill, and by their willingness to communicate what they knew to others, a great impulse was given to native talent and industry.

In mentioning the number of husbands the Wife of Bath has had, the poet incidentally refers to a curious old marriage custom. Formerly the bride and bridegroom stayed at the church porch during the earlier portion of the ceremony; and it was not till the clergyman had read the part which is now followed by his going up to the altar and repeating the psalm, that they entered the sacred edifice. "At the southern entrance of Norwich cathedral," says Warton, "a representation of the espousals, or sacrament of marriage, is carved in stone;" for here the hands of the couple were joined by the priest, and great part of the service performed. Here also the bride was endowed with what was called Dos ad ostium ecclesiæ. This ceremony is exhibited in a curious old picture engraved by Mr. Walpole; where King Henry VI. is married to his queen, standing at the façade or western portal of a magnificent Gothic church. The entire form of matrimony also, as celebrated at the church door, is described in certain Missals referring respectively to the cathedrals of Hereford and Salisbury.

Readers of the Wife of Bath's Prologue should consult the Rev. W. Woollcombe's paper on its sources, in the 'Essays on Chaucer,' Part III., Chaucer Society, 1876. The poet very cleverly puts into her mouth an inversion of a learned theologian's arguments against marriage. For analogues of her tale, see the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues of some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales,' Part V., 1887, p. 481-522.

THE TALES.

[For the 'Originals and Analogues of the *Canterbury Tales*,' see the volume with that title among the issues of the Chaucer Society. Most of Chaucer's Tales come, like other men's, from the East.]

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

ONCE, as old stories tell, there was a duke named Theseus, the lord and governor of Athens, and who, in his time, was such a conqueror, that there was not a greater under the sun. He had won many a rich country. With his wisdom and his chivalry, he conquered all the realm of the Amazons that was formerly called Scythia,—

And weddedè the queen Hypolita,

and brought her, and also her young sister Emily, home with him to his own country, with much glory and great solemnity. And thus with victory and with melody, I[1] leave this worthy duke to ride to Athens, with all his armed hosts beside him.

And, certes, if it were not too long to hear, I would have told you fully in what manner the country of the Amazons was won by Theseus and all his chivalry, and of the great battle fought upon the occasion betwixt the Athenians and the Amazons, and how besieged

was Hypolita
The fairè hardy queen of Scythia,

and of the feast that took place at her wedding, and of the temple erected on her coming home. But from all this I must at present forbear.

I have, God wot, a largè field to ear,[2]
And weakè be the oxen in my plough.

The remnant of my tale is long enough.

When this duke, of whom I made mention, was come almost to the town,

In all his weal, and in his mostè pride,
He was 'ware, as he cast his eye aside,

[1] The Knight, as well as each of the other Canterbury pilgrims, in telling his tale, speaks in the first person. [2] To plough.

Where that there kneelèd in the highè way
A company of ladies, tway and tway,
Each after other, clad in clothès black.
But such a cry, and such a woe they make,

that in this world there is no creature living that ever heard such another lamentation. And of this cry they would never cease till they had seized the reins of his bridle.

"What folk be ye, that at my coming home, so perturb my feast with crying?" quoth Theseus. "Have ye such great envy of mine honour that ye thus complain and cry? Or who hath harmed or offended you. Tell me, if that it may be amended; and why ye are thus clothed in black." Then spake the oldest lady of them all,

When she had swoonèd with a deadly cheer
That it was ruthè for to see or hear;
And saidè, "Lord, to whom Fortúne hath given
Victory, and as a conqueror to liven,
Nought grieveth us your glory and honóur,
But we beseechen mercy and succóur.
Have mercy on our woe and our distress!
Some drop of pity through thy gentleness
Upon us wretched women let thou fall;
For certes, Lord, there n'is none of us all
That she n' hath been a duchess or a queen;
Now we be caitives,[1] as it is well seen:
Thankèd be Fortune and her falsè wheel
That none estate ensureth to be wele.[2]

And, certes, Lord, to abide your presence here in this temple of the goddess Clemency, we have been waiting full this fortnight;

Now help us, Lord, since it is in thy might.

I, wretched wight, that weep and wail thus, was once wife to King Capaneus that perished at Thebes;

cursèd be that day!
And allè we that be in this array
And maken all this lamentatïoun,
We losten all our husbands at the town,
While that the siegè there abouten lay;

and yet now, alas the while! the old Creon—who is lord of the city of Thebes,—

Fulfilled of ire, and of iniquity,—
He for despite, and for his tyranny,

to do the dead bodies of all our slaughtered lords a dishonour,

[1] Wretches. [2] Well.

hath drawn them upon a heap, and will not suffer them, by no assent, either to be buried[1] or burnt,—

But maketh houndès eat them in despite."

And with that word, without more respite of their grief, they fall flat upon the ground, and cry piteously, "Have some mercy on us

wretched women!
And let our sorrow sinken in thine heart."
This gentle duke down from his courser start
With hearte piteous, when he heard them speak;
Him thoughtè that his hearte wouldè break,

when he saw those who had once been of such great estate so dejected and in so pitiable a condition. And he took them all up in his arms, and comforted them, in full good intent, and swore his oath, as he was a true knight, that he would do to the utmost of his power to be avenged upon the tyrant Creon, so

That all the people of Greecè shouldè speak
How Creon was of Thesëus yservèd,
As he that hath his death right well deservèd
And right anon without any abode
His banner he displayeth, and forth he rode
To Thebès ward, and all his host beside.

No nearer would he go to Athens,

Nor take his easè fully half a day;
But onward, on his way, that night he lay;

and sent Hypolita the queen, and her young sister, Emily the bright, to dwell in the town of Athens. And forth he rides.

The red statúe of Mars with spear and targe,
So shineth in his whitè banner large,
That all the fieldès glitteren up and down.
And by his banner, borne was his pennón,
Of gold full rich, in which there was ybeat
The Minotaur,[2] which that he slew in Crete.

[1] We cannot better illustrate the views of the ancients on the subject of the burial of dead bodies, than by observing, that one of the greatest tragedies of one of the greatest of tragedians, 'The Antigone of Sophocles,' turns entirely upon the misery and ruin brought on by the refusal of a king of Thebes of the rites of burial to a nephew, because he had been a traitor to his country. That king was Creon; probably the very same man that Chaucer refers to.

[2] That is to say, we presume, there was impressed on the gold, by the *beat* of the hammer, a representation of the Minotaur.

Thus rode this duke—thus rode this conqueror,
And in his host of chivalry the flower,
Till that he came to Thebès, and alight
Fair in a field, where as he thought to fight.

But, shortly to speak of this matter, he fought with Creon, the king of Thebes,

———and slew him, manly, as a knight
In plain[1] battél, and put his folk to flight,
And by assault he won the city after,
And rentè down both wall, and spar, and rafter ;
And to the ladies he restor'd again
The bodies of their husbands that were slain,
To do obséquies, as was then the guise.

But it were all too long to describe the great clamour and the lamentation which the ladies made at the burning of the bodies, and the great honour that Theseus, the noble conqueror, doth to the ladies, when they depart from him. It is my intent to tell my tale shortly.

When that this worthy duke, this Theseus, hath slain Creon and won Thebes,

Still in the field he took all night his rest.

And he did as he pleased with all the country. After the battle and discomfiture, the pillagers did their business ; they ransacked the heap of dead bodies, in order to strip them of their armour and garments. And it so befell that they found in the heap, pierced through with many a bloody grievous wound, two young knights, lying by each other, in the same kind of armour, which was full richly wrought. Of these two, one was named Arcite, the other Palamon,

Not fully quick[2] nor fully dead they were ;
But by their coat armóur, and by their gear

the heralds knew them well, as those who were of the royal blood of Thebes, and born of two sisters. The pillagers have torn them out of the heap, and have carried them softly into the tent of Theseus ; and he full soon sends them to Athens, to dwell in perpetual prison : he would take no ransom. And when the worthy duke had done thus, he took his host, and rode home immediately,

With laurel crownèd as a conqueror.
And there he liveth in joy, and in honóur,
Term of his life ;

[1] Open. [2] Alive.

And in a tower, in woe and in anguish, dwell Palamon and Arcite for evermore : no gold may release them.

Thus passeth year by year, and day by day,
Till it fell onès in a morrow of May,
That Emily, that fairer was to seen
Than is the lily, on her stalkè green,
And fresher than the May with floweres new,
(For with the rosè-colour strove her hue,
I n'ot[1] which was the finer of them two) ;
Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and all ready dight,[2]
For May will have no sluggardy a-night ;
The season pricketh every gentle heart,
And maketh him out of his sleepè start,
And saith "Arise, and do thine observance!"
This maked Emily have rémembrance
To do honour to May, and for to rise.
Yclothèd was she fresh for to devise.
Her yellow hair was braided in a tress,
Behind her back, a yardè long, I guess.
And in the garden at the sun uprist
She walketh up and down where as her list.
She gathereth flowers, partly white and red,
To make a subtle garland for her head ;
And as an angel, heavenly she sung.

The great tower, that was so thick and strong, and that formed the chief dungeon of the castle in which these knights were imprisoned, of which I told you, and yet shall tell you, was evenly joined to the wall of the garden, where

——— this Emily had her playing.

Bright was the sun, and clear the morning ; and Palamon, the woeful prisoner, by leave of his gaoler, was risen, as was his custom ; and he roamed in a chamber on high, from which he could see all the city, and also

the garden, full of branches green,
There as the freshè Emily, the sheen,[3]
Was in her walk, and roamèd up and down.
This sorrowful prisoner, this Palamon,
Goeth in the chamber, roaming to and fro,
And to himself complaining of his woe,
That he was born, full oft he said Alas!

And it so befell by adventure, or by chance,

That through a window thick, and many a bar
Of iron great, and square as any spar,

[1] Know not. [2] Dressed. [3] Bright.

He cast his eyn upon Emilia,
And therewithal he blent,[1] and criëd "Ha!"
As that he stungen were unto the heart.
And with that cry Arcite anon up start,
And saidè; "Cousin mine, what aileth thee,
That art so pale and deadly for to see?
Why criedst thou? who hath thee done offence?
For Goddès love, take all in patïence
Our prison; for it may none other be;
Fortune hath given us this adversity:
Some wick'd aspéct or dispositïon
Of Saturn, by some constellatïon,

Hath given us this:—

So stood the heaven when that we were born.
We must endure; this is the short and plain."
This Palamon answér'd, and said again,
"Cousin, forsooth of this opinïon
Thou has a vain imaginatïon.
This prison causèd me not for to cry;
But I was hurt right now thorough mine eye
Into mine heart; that will my banè be.
The fairness of the lady that I see,
'Yond in the garden, roaming to and fro,
Is cause of all my crying and my woe:
I no't whe'r she be woman or goddéss,
But Venus is it, soothly,[2] as I guess."

And therewithal he fell down on his knees, and said,

——————— "Venus, if it be your will,
You, in this garden, thus to transfigúre
Before me sorrowful wretched creäture,
Out of this prison, help that we may 'scape.
And if so be, our destiny be shape[3]
By éterne word to dien in prisón,
Of our lin'áge have some compassïon
That is so low ybrought by tyranny."
And with that word Arcitè 'gan espy
Where as this lady roamèd to and fro.
And with that sight her beauty hurt him so,
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as much as he, or more.
And with a sigh he saidè piteously,
"The freshè beauty slay'th me suddenly
Of her that roameth yonder in the place;
And but I have her mercy, and her grace,
That I may see her, at the leastè way,
I n' am but dead, there n' is no more to say."

[1] Stopped suddenly. [2] Truly. [3] Shaped—determined.

When Palamon heard these words, he looked fiercely, and said,

"Whether say'st thou in earnest or in play?"
"Nay," quoth Arcite, "in earnest in good fay;[1]

God help me, I am little inclined to sport."—Palamon began to knit his brows;

"It were," quoth he, "to thee no great honóur,
For to be false, ne for to be traitór
To me, that am thy cousin and thy brother,
Ysworn full deep, and each of us to other,—
That never—for to dien in the pain[2]—
Till that the death departen[3] shall us twain,
Neither of us in love to hinder other,
Ne in none other case, my liefè[4] brother;
But that thou shouldest truly further me
In every case, as I shall further thee;
This was thine oath, and mine also, certáin;
I wot right well, thou dar'st it not withsain:
Thus art thou of my counsel, out of doubt;
And now thou wouldest falsely be about
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And ever shall until mine heartè sterve.[5]
Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt not so:
I lov'd her first, and toldè thee my woe
As to my counsel and to brother sworn,
To further me, as I have told beforn;
For which thou art ybounden as a knight
To helpen me, if it lie in thy might;
Or elles art thou false, I dare well say."

Arcite spake again full proudly,

"Thou shalt," quoth he, "be rather false than I;
And thou art false, I tell thee—utterly;
For *par amour*[6] I loved her first, then thou.
What wilt thou say?

Thou dost not yet know

Whether she be a woman or goddéss:
Thine is affection of holiness,
And mine is love as of a creäture,
For which I toldè thee mine ádventure,
As to my cousin, and my brother sworn.

[1] Faith.
[2] That is to say, never though death—to dien in the pain—be the result of their mutual devotion.
[3] Part, separate. [4] Dear. [5] Die.
[6] Hence the modern English word that has gradually become so debased in its application—paramour.

Suppose even that thou didst love her first :

Wott'st thou not well, the oldè clerkès' saw[1]
That—Who shall give a lover any law ?

By my head, Love is ag reater law than may be given for any earthly man ; and therefore positive law, and

such decree
Is broke alway for love, in each degree.
A man must needès love, maugre[2] his head ;
He may nought flee it, though he should be dead,
All be she maid or widow, or ellès wife,

that calls it forth. And, also, it is not likely that in all thy life thou shalt be able to stand in her favour ; no more shall I ; thou knowest well that thou and I be condemned to perpetual prison :—we gain no ransom ;

We strive as do the houndès for the bone :
They fought all day, and yet their part was none :
There came a kitè, while that they were wroth,
And bore away the bone betwixt them both :
And therefore at the kingès court, my brother,
Each man for himself : there is none other.[3]
Love if thee list,[4] for I love, and aye shall ;
And soothly, levè brother, this is all.
Here in this prison musten we endure,
And every of us take his ádventure."

Great was the strife, and long, betwixt these two, if I had but leisure to describe it. But to the effect : It happened on a day, that a worthy Duke named Perithous, who had been companion to the Duke Theseus from the day that they had been little children, came to Athens to visit him,

And for to play as he was wont to do ;
For in this world he lovèd no man so,
And he lov'd him as tenderly again.
So well they loved, as oldè bookès sain,[5]
That when that one was dead, soothly to tell,
His fellow went and sought him down in hell ;
But of that story list me not to write.

Duke Perithous loved Arcite well, and had known him at Thebes year by year ; and finally, at his request and prayer, without any ransom, Theseus let Arcite out of prison, to go

[1] In Boethius's 'Consolations of Philosophy,' which Chaucer translated, and from which he has frequently borrowed in his own original works.
[2] In spite of.
[3] None other rule.
[4] Please or desire.
[5] Say.

freely where he pleased. But this was the previous understanding between Theseus and Arcite; that if it so were that Arcite were ever in his life found, by day or night, one moment, in any country of Theseus, and he were caught, he should lose his head. There was no other remedy nor counsel. Arcite takes his leave, and speeds homeward. Let him beware; his neck lies in pledge.

How great a sorrow suffereth now Arcite!
The death he feeleth through his heartè smite;
He weepeth, waileth, crieth piteously;
To slay himself he waiteth privily.
He said—"Alas, the day that I was born!
Now is my prison worse than was beforn;
Now is me shaped[1] eternally to dwell
Nought in the purgatory, but in hell.
Alas! that ever I knew Perithous,
For ellès had I dwelt with Theseus
Yfettered in his prison evermo';
Then had I been in bliss and not in woe;
Only the sight of her whom that I serve,
Though that her gracè I may not deserve,
Would have sufficèd right enough for me.
'O dearè cousin Palamon,' quoth he,
'Thine is the victory of this adventure.
Full blissfully in prison to endure:
In príson? Nay, certes, but in Paradise!
Well hath Fortúne yturnèd thee the dice,
That hath the sight of her, and I th' absénce;
For possible is, since thou hast her presénce,

and art an able and worthy knight, that by some chance, since Fortune is changeable, thou mayest attain, some time, to thy desire. But I that am exiled, and barren of all grace, and in such great despair that there is neither earth, water, fire, nor air, nor creature that is made from them, that may heal me or comfort me in this matter,—well ought I to perish in my despair

and distress;
Farewell my life, and all my jolyness!

Alas, why do folk complain so commonly

Of púrvéyance[2] of God, or of Fortúne,
That giveth them full oft in many a guise
Well better than they can themselves devise?
Some man desireth for to have richéss,
That cause is of his murder, or great sicknéss;

[1] Destined. [2] Providence, predestination, ordination.

And some man would out of his prison fain[1]
That in his house is of his menie[2] slain;
Infinite harmès be in this mattére:
We wot nevèr what thing we prayen here.
We faren as he that drunk is as a mouse:
A drunken man wot well he hath a house,
But he knows not which is the right way thider,
And to a drunken man the way is slider[3];
And certes in this world so faren we:
We seeken fast aftér felicity,

but, truly, full often we go wrong. Thus may we all say; but especially I, who believed, and had a great opinion, that if I might escape from prison, then should I be in joy and perfect health, whereas I am now exiled from my happiness. Since I may not see you, Emily, I am but as one dead: there is no remedy."

Palamon, on the other side, when he knew that Arcite was gone, maketh such sorrow that the great tower resounded with his yelling and clamour. The very fetters on his shins were wet with his salt and bitter tears.

"Alas," quoth he, "Arcita, cousin mine,
Of all our strife, God wot, the fruit is thine.
Thou walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my woe thou givest little charge.

Thou mayest, since thou hast wisdom and manhood, assemble all the people of our kindred, and make so sharp a war on this country, that by some adventure or treaty

Thou mayst her win to lady and to wife,
For whom that I must needès lose my life.
For as by way of possibility
Since thou art at thy large, of prison free,
And art a lord, great is thine advantage
More than is mine, that starve[4] here in a cage.
For I may weep and wail, while that I live,
With all the woe that prison may me give,
And eke with pain that love me giv'th also,
That doubleth all my torment and my woe."
Therewith the fire of jealousy up start
Within his breast, and hent[5] him by the heart
So woodly,[6] that he like was to behold
The box tree, or the ashes dead and cold.
Then said he, "O goddès cruel that govérn
This world, with binding of your word etérn',

[1] Gladly. [2] Attendants. [3] Slippery—treacherous.
[4] Perish. [5] Seized. [6] Frenziedly.

And writen in the table of adamant,
Your parliament[1] and your eternal grant,
What is mankindè more unto you hold
Than is the sheep that rouketh[2] in the fold?
For slain is man right as another beast,
And dwelleth eke in prison and arrest,
And hath sicknéss and great adversity,—
And often timès guiltèless, pardé.[3]
What governance is in your prescïence
That, guiltèless, tormenteth innocence,—

and that even increases all this my pain,—that man must be bound to observe, for God's sake, to check his own

will,
There as a beast may all his lust fulfil?
And when a beast is dead, he hath no pain,
But man aftér his death must weep and plain,
Though in this world he havè care and woe:
Withouten doubtè, it may standen so.
The answer of this lete[4] I to divínès,
But well I wot, that in this world great pine is.
Alas! I see a serpent or a thief,
That many a truè man hath done mischíef,
Go at his large, and where him lust[5] may turn.
But I must be in prison through Satúrn,
And eke through Juno, jealous, and eke wood,[6]
That hath destroyèd well nigh all the blood
Of Thebès, with his wastè wallès wide.
And Venus slay'th me on that other side,
For jealousy, and fear of him, Arcite."

The summer passeth, and the long nights increase doubly the strong pains both of the lover and the prisoner. I know not which hath the saddest condition; for Palamon is condemned to perpetual prison, and to die in his chains and fetters; and Arcite is exiled for evermore out of that country, on penalty of his head:

Ne never more shall he his lady see.
Now lovers ask I you this questïon,
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamon?
That one may see his lady day by day,
But in prisón he mustè dwell alwáy.
That other where him lust, may ride or go,
But see his lady shall he never mo'.

Now, ye that can, judge as you please.

[1] Consultations. [2] Huddleth.
[3] A corruption of the French oath pardieux, or Par Dieux.
[4] Leave. [5] Please. [6] Mad.

When that Arcite had come to Thebes, full oft a day he swooned, and said Alas! for he shall never more see his lady. And shortly to conclude his woe,

So much sorrów had never creäture
That is or shall be, while the world will 'dure.
His sleep, his meat, his drink is him beraft,
That lean he wax'd, and dry as any shaft.
His eyen hollow, grisly to behold;
His huë fallow,[1] and pale as ashes cold;
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And wailing all the night, makíng his moan.
And if he heardè song or instrument,
Then would he weep, he mightè nought be stent.[2]
So feeble were his spirits, and so low,
And changèd so, that no man couldè know
His speechè nor his voice, though men it heard.

And in his garb, he fared, for all the world, like one possessed not only by the lover's malady of Ereos,[3] but by many maladies engendered of melancholy humours, before his head, in his fantastic cell. And, in short, both the habit and disposition of this woeful lover, Dan Arcite, were turned upside down.

When he had endured for a year or two this cruel torment, and this pain and woe at Thebes, in his own country, as I have said,—upon a night, as he lay in sleep,

Him thought how that the wingèd god, Mercúry,
Before him stood, and bade him to be merry.
His sleepy yard[4] in hand he bare upright;
A hat he wear'd upon his hairès bright.

This god was arrayed (he observed) as he was when Argus took his sleep. He said to him thus,

"To Athens shalt thou wend;
There is thee shapen of thy woe an end."

And with that word Arcite awoke and started. "Now truly," quoth he, "how sore that ever I smart, to Athens will I go at once. For no dread of death shall I refrain from seeing my lady, whom I love and serve. In her presence I reck not to perish." And with that word he caught a great mirror, and saw that his colour was all changed, and his visage quite of another kind. And immediately it ran in his mind, that since his face was so disfigured by the malady he had endured, he might well, if he bare himself in a lowly manner, live evermore in Athens unknown:

And see his lady well nigh day by day.

[1] Sallow—yellow. [2] Stopped. [3] Cupid. [4] Rod, wand.

So, immediately he changed his apparel, and clad himself as a poor labourer ; and all alone, with the exception of a squire,

That knew his privity, and all his case,
Which was disguisèd poorly, as he was.
To Athens is he gone, the nextè[1] way,
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he proffer'd his servíce
To drudge and draw, what so man would devise.

And, shortly to speak of this matter, he fell in office with a chamberlain who dwelled with Emily ; for he was wise, and could soon take note of every one that served her. Well could he hew wood, and bear water, for he was young and mighty for the occasion, and he was besides strong and big of bones, to do what any wight could devise for him. A year or two he was in this service,

Page of the chamber of Emily the bright ;

and Philostrate he said he was called.

But half so well beloved a man as he
Ne was there never in court of his degree.
He was so gentle of conditïoun
That throughout all the court was his renown.
They saidè that it were a charity
That Theseus would enhancen his degree,
And putten him in worshipful servíce,
There as he might his virtue exercise.
And thus within a while his namè sprung
Both of his deedès, and of goodè tongue,
That Thesëus hath taken him so near,
That of his chamber, he made him squiére,
And gave him gold to maíntain his degree.
And eke men brought him out of his country
From year to year, full privily his rent ;
But honestly and slily he it spent,
That no man wondered how that he it had.
And three year in this wise his life he lad ;[2]
And bear him so in peace and eke in war,
There was no man that Theseus hath so dear ;[3]

And in this bliss I will now leave Arcite, and speak a little of Palamon.

In darkness, and horríble and strong prisón
This seven year hath sitten Palamon
Forpinèd,[4] what for woe, and for distress.
Who feeleth double sorrow and heaviness
But Palamon? that love distraineth so,

[1] Nearest. [2] Led. [3] Holds dearer. [4] Wasted away.

that out of his wit he goeth mad for sorrow. And also, he is a prisoner perpetually, and not merely for a year.

> Who couldè rhyme in English properly
> His martyrdom? forsooth it am not I.
> Therefore I pass as lightly as I may.

It befell that in the seventh year, and on the third night of May, as old books relate, that tell all this story more plainly,

> Were it by ádventure or destiny
> (As when a thing is shapen, it shall be),

Palamon, soon after the midnight, by the help of a friend, brake prison,

> And fleeth the city fast as he may go.

For he had so given his gaoler to drink clarey,[1] made of a certain wine, with narcotics, and fine opium of Thebes,

> That all that night, though that men would him shake,
> The gaoler slept, he mightè not awake.
> And thus he fleeth as fast as ever he may.
> The night was short, and fastè[2] by the day,

so that he must needs consider how to hide himself. And to a grove close beside there,

> With dread-ful foot then stalketh Palamon.
> For, shortly, this was his opinïon,
> That in that grove he would him hide all day,
> And in the night then would he take his way
> To Thebès ward,

to beg of his friends to help him to make war upon Theseus. And shortly, either he would

> lose his life
> Or winnen Emily unto his wife.

Now will I turn again to Arcite, who little knew how nigh to him was his trouble, until that Fortune had brought him into the snare.

> The busy lark, the messenger of day,
> Saluteth in her song the morrow grey:
> And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright,
> That all the Orient laugheth of the sight;
> And with his streamès drieth in the greves[3]
> The silver droppès hanging on the leaves.

[1] A liquor made of wine, honey, etc. [2] Close—near. [3] Groves.

And Arcite, who is in the royal court of Theseus the principal squire,

Is risen, and looketh on the merry day,
And for to do his óbservance to May,
Rememb'ring of the point[1] of his desire,
He on his courser, starting as the fire,
Is ridden to the fieldès him to play,
Out of the court, were it a mile or tway.[2]
And to the grove of which that I you told,
By ádventure his way he gan to hold,
To maken him a garland of the greves,[3]
Were it of woodbine or of hawthorn leaves,
And loud he sang against the sunny sheen,
"O May, with all thy flow'res and thy green,
Welcome be thou, well fairè freshè May!
I hope that I some green here getten may."
And from his courser, with a lusty[4] heart,
Into the grove full hastily he start,
And in a path he roamèd up and down,
There, as by ádventure, this Palamon
Was in a bush, that no man might him see,
For sore afearèd of his death was he.

Nothing knew he that it was Arcite; God knows, he would full little have believed it. But truth to say, gone since

are many years,
That field hath eyen, and the wood hath ears.
It is full fair, a man to bear him even;
For all day meeten men at unset steven.[5]

Full little also knew Arcite that his fellow was so nigh to hearken to his words,

For in the bush he sitteth now full still.
When that Arcite had roamèd all his fill,
And sangen all the roundel lustily,
Into a study he fell suddenly;
As do these lovers in their quaintè gears,*
Now in the crop and now down in the breres;[6]

[1] Object. [2] Two. [3] Groves.
[4] Mirthful, joyous. [5] At unappointed times. [6] Briars.

* *Quainte gears*—strange modes or fashions, says Mr. C. Clarke. But if "gery Venus," who is immediately afterwards mentioned by the poet in connection with "these lovers," mean, as Mr. Clarke supposes, *gery*, changeful, from the French, *gerer*, to swim round, there is little doubt but that the same explanation is applicable to the former phrase. The lovers are, like their heavenly mistress, full of quaint or fantastic changes—

"Now in the crop, and now down in the breres;"

Now up, now down, as bucket in a well.
Right as the Friday, soothly for to tell,
Now it shineth, now it raineth fast ;
Right so 'gan geary Venus overcast
The heartès of her folk, right as her day
Is gearful, right so changeth her array :
Seld' is the Friday all the week ylike.

When Arcite had sung, he began to sigh,

And set him down withouten any more.
"Alas!" quoth he, "the day that I was bore!"

How long, Juno, through thy cruelty, wilt thou war against the city of Thebes? Alas! brought to confusion is the royal blood of Cadmus and Amphion ; of Cadmus, who was the first man that built Thebes, or first began the town, and was first crowned king of the city. Of his lineage am I—his offspring by direct line, of the royal stock. And now I am such a caitiff and a thrall that I serve as a poor squire he who is my mortal enemy. And yet Juno doth even more disgrace me ; for I dare not know mine own name, but whereas I was wont to be called Arcite I am now called Philostrate. Alas! thou fell Mars! alas, thou Juno! thus hath your ire destroyed all our lineage, save only me and the wretched Palamon that Theseus tormenteth in prison.

And over all this,—to slay me utterly
Love hath his fiery dart so burningly
Ystickèd through my truë careful heart,
That shapen was my death ere than my shirt,[1]
Ye slay me with your eyen, Emily ;
Ye be the causè wherefore that I die.

Upon all the remainder of my trouble, I do not set the value of a tare, so that I could do aught to please you."

---

or, in other words, now in the flush, the very harvest of fanciful thought, now down among its wastes and briars. Such at least seems to us the explanation of a line so clear and beautiful in itself that we could wish to leave it undiluted by any prose commentary, but that we find among the notes of the gentleman just named *top* given as the meaning of the word crop, and much of the beauty of the passage, to our thinking, thereby dissipated.

[1] Or, in other words, my death must have been determined before the cloth was spun in which I was first wrapped. Thus in 'Troilus and Cressida' we read—

"O fatal sistren, which ere any cloth
Me shapen was, my destiny me spun."

And with that word he fell down in a trance,
A longè time ;

and afterward started up Palamon, who thought he felt a cold sword glide suddenly through his heart. He shook for ire. No longer would he hide. And when he had heard Arcite's tale, with a deadly pale countenance, as though he were mad, he started up out of the thick bushes, and said, "False Arcite! false wicked traitor! now art thou caught,

that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have all this pain and woe ;
And art my blood, and to my counsel sworn,
As I full oft have told thee herebeforn ;
And hast bejapèd[1] here Duke Thesëus ;
And falsely changèd hast thy namè thus ;
I will be dead, or ellès thou shalt die.
Thou shalt not love my lady Emily ;
But I will love her only, and no mo'.
For I am Palamon thy mortal foe.
And though that I no weapon have in this place,
But out of prison am ystart by grace,[2]
I dreadè nought that either thou shalt die,
Or thou ne shalt not loven Emily :
Choose which thou wilt, for thou shalt not astart."[3]
This Arcite then, with full dispiteous[4] heart,
When he him knew, and had his talè heard,
As fierce as a lión pull'd out a sword,
And saidè thus ; "By God that sitteth above,
N' ere[5] it that thou art sick, and wood[6] for love,
And eke that thou no weapon hast in this place,
Thou shouldest never out of this grovè pace,

but,

shouldest dien of my hond ;
For I defy the surety and the bond
Which that thou sayest I have made to thee.
What! very fool! think well that love is free.

And I will love her, in spite of all thy power. But for that thou art a worthy gentle knight, and desirest to contest her by battle, have here my truth, that to-morrow I will not fail, without the knowledge of any other person, here to be found as a knight ;—

And bringen harness right enough for thee,
And choose the best, and leave the worst for me.

[1] Deceived, tricked. [2] Started or escaped by grace or favour.
[3] Escape. [4] Unpitying—fierce. [5] Ne were—were it not. [6] Mad.

And meat and drinkè, this night will I bring
Enough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
And if so be that thou my lady win,
And slay me in this wood that I am in,
Thou may'st well have thy lady as for me."
This Palamon answér'd, "I grant it thee."

And thus have they parted until the morrow, when each of them hath laid his faith in pledge.

O Cupid, out of allè charity!
O regne[1] that wilt no fellow have with thee!

Truly is it said, that neither love nor lordship will, with their good will, have any fellowship :—

Well finden that Arcite and Palamon.

Arcite rode immediately into the town. And on the morrow, before daylight, he had prepared privately two sets of armour, both fit and sufficient to contest the battle in the field between these two. And on his horse, as he rode alone, he carried all this armour before him.

And in the grove, at time and place yset,
This Arcite and this Palamon be met,
Then changen 'gan the colour in their face,
Right as the hunter in the regne[2] of Thrace,
That standeth in the gappè with a spear,
When hunted is the lion or the bear,
And heareth him come rushing in the greves[3]
And breaking both the boughès and the leaves,
And thinks, "Here comes my mortal enemy,
Withouten fail, he must be dead or I;
For either I must slay him at the gap,
Or he must slay me, if it me mishap:"
So fareden they in changing of their hue,
As far[4] as either of them other knew.

There was no "good-day," no saluting, but straight, without exchanging of words, each helped to arm the other
As friendly as he were his owen brother.

And after that, with strong and sharp spears, they thrust at

[1] King. [2] Realm. [3] Groves.
[4] That is to say, when they distinguished each other, as "far" off "as either of them" could the "other" know.

each other for a wondrously long time. Though it seemed

that this Palamon
In his fightíng were as a wood[1] lión,
And as a cruel tiger was Arcite.
As wildè boarès 'gannè they to smite,
That frothen white as foam for irè wood ;[1]
Up to the ankle fought they in their blood.
And in this wise I let them fighting dwell,
And further I will of Theseus you tell :—
The destiny, minister general,
That executeth in the world o'er all
The púrveyance[2] that God hath seen beforn,—
So strong it is, that though the world had sworn,
The contrary of a thing, by yea or nay,
Yet sometime it shall fall upon a day
That falleth not eft[3] in a thousand year.
For certainly our appetitès here,
Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or love,
All is it rulèd by the sight above.

This mean I now by mighty Theseus, who is so desirous to hunt, and especially

the greatè hart in May,
That in his bed there dawneth him no day
That he n' is[4] clad, and ready for to ride
With hunt and horn, and houndès him beside.
For in his hunting hath he such delight,
That it is all his joy and appetite
To be himself the greatè hartè's bane ;
For after Mars he serveth now Diane.

Clear was the day,

And Theseus with allè joy and bliss,
With his Hypolita, the fairè queen,
And Emily yclothèd all in green,

ride royally in the hunt. And to the grove, that stood close by, in which men told him there was a hart, Duke Theseus takes the straight way ; and he rideth right to the laund,[5] where the hart was used to take flight,

And over a brook, and so forth on his way.

The Duke will have a course or two at him with hounds, such as he pleases

to command.
And when this duke was come into the laund,[5]

[1] For vengeance mad. [2] Ordinance. [3] Again.
[4] Ne is—is not. [5] An open space in a forest.

Under the sun he lookèd, right anon
He was aware of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme,[1] as it were boarès two.
The brightè swordès wenten to and fro
So hideously, that with the leastè stroke
It seemeth that it wouldè fell an oak.

But what they were, nothing yet he knew. This Duke, then, smote his courser with his spurs,

And at a start he was betwixt them two,
And pullèd out a sword, and criëd "Ho!
No more, up' pain of losing of your head.
By mighty Mars! anon he shall be dead
That smiteth any stroke that I may see.
But telleth me what mistere[2] men ye be
That be so hardy for to fighten here,
Withouten judge or other officere,
As it were in a listès royally.

Palamon hastily answered, "Sirè, what needeth more words? We have both of us deserved the death. Two woeful wretches are we, two caitiffs, encumbered of our own lives; and as thou art a rightful lord and judge, give us neither refuge nor mercy;

And slay me first, for saintè Charity,
But slay my fellow eke, as well as me.
Or slay him first; for though thou know him lite,[3]
This is thy mortal foe, this is Arcite,
That from thy land is banish'd on his head[4]
For which he had deservèd to be dead.
For this is he that came unto thy gate,
And saidè, that he hightè[5] Philostrate.
Thus hath he japèd[6] thee many a year,
And thou hast maked of him thy chief squiére,
And this is he that loveth Emily.
For sith[7] the day is come that I shall die,
I makè plainly my confessïon,
That I am thilkè[8] woful Palamon,
That hath thy prison broken wilfully.
I am thy mortal foe; and it am I
That loveth so hot, Emily the bright,
That I will dien present in her sight.
Therefore I askè death, and my jewïse.[9]
But slay my fellow in the samè wise,
For both we have deservèd to be slain."

[1] Furiously. [2] Or, in other words, men of what condition.
[3] Little. [4] On penalty of. [5] Was called.
[6] Tricked. [7] Since. [8] That. [9] Judgment.

This worthy Duke immediately answered—

"This is a short conclusïon;
Your own mouth, by your own confessïon,
Hath damnèd [1] you both, and I will it record.
It needed not to pain you with the cord,
Ye shall be dead, by mighty Mars the Red." [2]

Immediately, for very womanhood, the Queen began

to weep, and so did Emily,
And all the ladies in the company.
Great pity was it, as it thought them all,
That ever such a chancè shouldè fall;
For gentle men they were of great estate,
And nothing but for love was this debate;
And saw their bloody woundès wide and sore;
And all they crièd lessè and the more,
"Have mercy, Lord, upon us women all!"
And on their barè knees anon they fall,
And would have kissed his feet there as he stood,
Till at the last aslakèd [3] was his mood;
(For pity runneth soon in gentle heart) [4]
And though he first for irè quoke and start, [5]
He hath it all considered in a clause
The trespass of them bothè, and their cause;
And álthough that his ire their guilt accused,
Yet in his reason he them both excused.
And thus he thought: that every manner man
Will help himself in love if that he can,
And eke deliver himself out of prisón.
And in his heartè had compassïon
Of women, for they wepten ever in one. [6]
And in his gentle heart he thought anon,
And soothly he to himself saidè, "Fie
Upon a lord that will have no mercy,
But be a lion both in word and deed
To them that be in répentance and drede,
As well as to a proud dispiteous man,
That will maintainen what he first began.

[1] Condemned.
[2] That is to say, ye shall not be humiliated by the hangman's cord, but suffer the more honourable death that Mars inflicts, namely, with the sword.
[3] Slaked—tempered.
[4] Chaucer's favourite line.
[5] For vengeance shook and started.
[6] That is to say, ever in one unbroken grief; or, in plain prose, continually.

That lord hath little of discretïon
That in such case can[1] no divisïon,
But weigheth pride and humbless after one."
And shortly, when his ire is over gone
He gan to look on them with eyen light;

and to speak on high these words—

"The God of Love, ah, *benedicite!*
How mighty and how great a lord is he!
Against his might, there gaineth[2] none obstácle;
He may be clep'd[3] a god of his mirácle,
For he can maken at his owèn guise,
Of every heart, as that him lust devise.

Lo, here this Palamon and Arcite, that were quite out of prison, and might have lived royally in Thebes, that know I am their mortal enemy, and that their death also lies in my power; and yet hath love in spite of

their eyen two
Ybrought them hither, bothè for to die.
Now looketh, is not this a high folly?
Who may not be a fool, if that he love?
Behold, for Goddès sake, that sits above,
See how they bleed! be they not well array'd?
Thus hath their lord, the god of love, them paid
Their wages, and their fees for their servíce:
And yet they weenen[4] for to be full wise,
That serven love, for aught that may befall.
But this is yet the bestè game of all,
That she, for whom they have this jealousy
Can them therefore as muchel thank as me;[5]
She wot no more of all this hotè fare
By God, than wot a cuckoo or a hare.
But all must be assayéd, hot or cold,
A man must be a fool, or young or old.

I know it by myself full long ago; for in my time I was a servant. And therefore since I know of love's pain, and know how sorely it can take possession of a man,—as he that hath been often caught in his snare,—I forgive you entirely this trespass, at the request

of the queen that kneeleth here,
And eke of Emily, my sister dear.

And ye shall both immediately swear unto me that ye shall never more make war upon my dear country or upon me,

[1] Can make, or knows. [2] Prevaileth. [3] Called. [4] Believe.
[5] Gives them no more thanks for it than I do.

by night nor day, but be my friends in all that ye can. I forgive you this trespass every bit." And they swore, as he asked fair and well; and prayed him for mercy and lordship; and he granted them grace; and then said, as to their love, Emily:—

"To speak of rëal lineage and richéss,
Though that she were a queen or a princéss,
Each of you both is worthy, doubtèless
To wedden when time is; but, nathèless
(I speak as for my sister Emily,
For whom ye have this strife and jealousy)
Ye wot yourself, she may not wedden two
At onès, though ye foughten evermo';
That one of you, or be him loth or lief,[1]
He may go pipen in an ivy leaf.
This is to say, she may not have you both,
All be ye never so jealous, ne so wroth.

And therefore I put you in this state that each of you shall have his destiny, as it is determined for him. Hearken in what manner. Lo, here is the end for you of which I shall devise. My will is this; for plain conclusion, and without any replications, —if that you like it, take it for the best:—That each of you shall go where he pleases, freely, without ransom or danger; and that this day fifty weeks, neither further nor nearer, each of you shall bring a hundred knights, armed fully for the lists, all ready to contest her by battle. And this I promise you without fail, upon my truth, and as I am a knight, whichever of you both hath the power, that is to say, that whether he or thou, may with his hundred, slay his opponent, or drive him out of the lists—

Him shall I given Emily to wife
To whom that fortune giveth so fair a grace.
The listès shall I maken in this place.
And God so wisely on my soulè rue
As I shall even[2] judgè be, and true.

Ye shall make no other end with me, but that one of you shall be dead or taken. And if you think this is well said, speak your minds, and hold yourselves satisfied,

This is your end, and your conclusïon."
Who looketh lightly now, but Palamon?
Who springeth up for joyè, but Arcite?
Who couldè tellè, or who could it indite,
The joyè that is madè in this place,
When Thesèus hath done so fair a grace?
But down on kneës wentè every wight,
And thankèd him with all their heartès might

[1] Glad. [2] Impartial.

and especially these Thebans often times. And thus with good hopes and blithe hearts they take their leave, and begin to ride homeward to Thebes, with its wide and old walls.

I trow men would deem it negligent if I forgot to tell the expenditure of Theseus, who goes so busily to form the lists in a royal manner, that I dare well say that such a noble theatre there was not in all the world beside. The circuit was a mile about, with stone walls, and a ditch beyond. It was round in shape, and the seats were arranged like the degrees of a compass, radiating from the centre, and raised to the height of sixty paces, so that when a man was placed on one stage he hindered not his fellow from seeing. Eastward there stood a gate of white marble, and opposite on the west, just such another.

> And shortly to concluden, such a place
> Was none in earthè in so little space.

There were no craftsmen in the land, skilled in geometry or architecture, no painter nor carver of images that Theseus did not give him meat and wages to devise and make the theatre.

> And for to do his rite and sacrifice,
> He eastward hath upon the gate above,
> In worship of Venús, goddéss of love,
> Done make[1] an altar and an oratóry.
> And westward—in the mind and in memóry
> Of Mars—he hath ymakèd such another
> That costè largèly of gold a fother.[2]
> And northward, in a turret on the wall,
> Of alabaster white, and red corál,
> An oratory richè for to see
> In worship of Dian, goddéss of chastity,

hath Theseus wrought in a noble manner. But yet had I forgotten to describe

> The noble carving and the portraitures,
> The shape, the countenance of the figúres
> That weren in these oratóries three.
> First in the temple of Venus thou may see,
> Wrought on the wall, full piteous to behold,
> The broken sleepès, and the sighings cold,
> The sacred tearès, and the waimenting,[3]
> The fiery strokès of the désiring,

[1] Caused to be made.
[2] A cart-load, hence any indefinite great quantity.
[3] Lamentings.

That Lovè's servants in this life enduren ;
The oaths that by her covenants assuren ;
Pleasance and Hope, Desire, Foolhardiness,
Beauty and Youth, Baudry and Richéss,
Charmès and Sorcery, Lesings[1] and Flattery,
Dispencè, Busïness, and Jealousy,—
That wear'd of yellow goldès[2] a garland,
And had a cuckoo sitting on her hand ;
Feastès, instrúments, carolès, and dances,
Lust, and array, and all the circumstánces
Of Love, which that I reckoned, and reckon shall,
Each by othér were painted on the wall,
And more than I can make of mentïon.[3]
For soothly all the Mount of Citheron,
There[4] Venus hath her principal dwellíng,
Was showèd on the wall in pourtraying,
With all the garden, and the lustiness.[5]
Nought was forgotten :—the porter Idleness ;
Ne Nárcissus the fair, of yore agone ;
Ne yet the folly of King Solomon ;
Ne yet the greatè strength of Hercules ;
Th' enchantments of Medea and Circés ;
Ne of Turnús, the hardy fierce courage ;
Ne richè Crœsus caitiff[6] in servage.
Thus may we see that wisdom and richéss,
Beauty, ne sleight,[7] strengthè ne hardinéss,
Ne may with Venus holdè champarty,[8]
For as she lust, the world then may she gie.[9]

Lo, all these folk were caught in her snare,

Till they for woe, full often said "alas!"

Suffice here these one or two examples ; and yet I could reckon a thousand more.

The statue of Venus, glorious for to see,
Was naked, floating in the largè sea,
And from the navel down all covered was
With wavès green, and bright as any glass.
A citole[10] in her right hand haddè she ;
And on her head full seemly for to see,
A rose garland full sweet, and well smellíng ;
Aboven her head her dovès flickering.

[1] Lying.
[2] The yellow goldès are the yellow flowers of the Turnsol.
[3] Make mention of. [4] Where. [5] Delight.
[6] Wretched. [7] Skill. [8] Share of power. [9] Guide.
[10] A musical instrument, probably of the dulcimer kind. Gower mentions it among the instruments "which sounded low."

Before her stood her sonè Cupido,
Upon his shoulders weren wingès two,
And blind he was, as it is often seen ;
A bow he bare, and arrows fair and keen.
Why should I not as well eke tell you all
The portraiture that was upon the wall,
Within the temple of mighty Mars the Red ?
All painted was the wall in length and brede.[1]
Like to the estres[2] of the grisly place
That hight the great tempél of Mars in Thrace ;
In thilkè cold and frosty regïon
There as Mars hath his sov'reign mansïon.
First on the wall was painted a forést,
In which there dwelled neither man nor beast,
With knotty, knarly, barren, treës old,
Of stubbès sharp, and hideous to behold ;
In which there ran a rumble and a swough,[3]
'Twere as a storm should bursten every bough.
And downward on a hill under a bent[4]
There stood the Temple of Mars Armipotent,
Wrought all of burnish'd steel ; of which th' entrée
Was long and strait, and ghastly for to see ;
And thereout came a rage and such a prise[5]
That it made all the gatès for to rise.
The northern light in at the doorè shone,
For window on the wall ne was there none,
Through which men mighten any light discern.
The doors were all of adamant etern',
Yclenchèd overthwart and endèlong,[6]
With iron tough ; and for to make it strong,
Every pillar, the temple to sustene,
Was tonnè great, of iron bright and sheen.
There saw I first the dark imagining
Of Felony,—and all the compassing ;
The cruel ire,[7] as red as any glede ;[8]
The pickè-purse, and eke the palè drede ;[9]
The smiler with the knife undér his cloak ;
The shepen[10] burning, with the blackè smoke ;
The treason of the murdering in the bed ;
The open wars, with woundès all be-bled ;
Contest with bloody knife, and sharp menáce.
All full of chirking was that sorry place.

[1] Breadth. Interior.
[3] This is no doubt the "sough" of Burns, and other northern poetical writers ; but how much finer is the old form of the word ?
[4] Bend or slope of the soil. [5] Rush.
[6] Crosswise and lengthwise. [7] Vengeance.
[8] Burning coal. [9] Dread or fear. [10] Stable.

The slayer of himself yet saw I there,
His heartè's blood hath bathèd all his hair;
The nail ydriven in the shode[1] anight;
The coldè death, with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddès of the temple sate Mischance,
With discomfort and evil countenance.
Yet saw I Woodness[2] laughing in his rage;

. . . . . .

The carrion in the bush, with throat ycarven;
A thousand slain, and not of qualm ystarven;[3]
The tyrant, with the prey by force yreft;
The town destroyèd—there was nothing left.
Yet saw I burnt the shippès hoppesteres;[4]
The hunter strangled with the wildè bears;
The sow frettíng[5] the child right in the cradle;
The cook yscaldd[6] for all his longè ladle:
Nought be forgotten th' infortúne of Mart,
The carter overridden with his cart;
Under the wheel full low he lay adown.
There were also of Mars' division
The barbour, and the bowyer, and the smith
That forgeth sharpè swordès on his stith.[7]
And all above depainted in a tower,
Saw I Conquést, sitting in great honóur,
With thilkè sharpè sword over his head,
Hanging by a subtle twinèd thread.
Depainted was there the slaught'[8] of Julius,
Of great Neró, and of Antonius:
All be[9] that ilkè time they were unborn,
Yet was their death depainted there beforn
By menacing of Mars, right by figúre;
So was it shewed right in the portraiture
As is depainted in the stars above,
Who shall be slain, or ellès dead for love.
Sufficeth one example in stories old;
I may not reckon them allè, though I wold.
The statue of Mars upon a cartè[10] stood,
Armèd, and lookèd grim as he were wood;[11]
And over his head there shineth two figúres
Of starrès, that be clepèd in Scriptúres

[1] Temple of the head. [2] Madness.
[3] That is to say, and not *ystarven*—destroyed, through *qualm*—sickness, or disease.
[4] Hoppesteres, probably from the Saxon words, *hoppe*—waves, and *ster*. The meaning, therefore, would be that the ship was burnt, even as she danced upon the waves—a most striking, poetical, and picturesque image.
[5] Devouring. [6] Scalded. [7] Stith—anvil. [8] Slaughter.
[9] Albeit, although. [10] Car, or Carriage. [11] Mad.

That one Puella, that other Rubëus.
This god of Armès was arrayèd thus,
A wolf there stood before him at his feet
With eyen red, and of a man he eat.
With subtle pencil painted was this story
In rédoubting[1] of Mars, and of his glory.
Now to the temple of Dián the chaste
As shortly as I can, I will me haste,
To tellen you all the descriptïoun
Depainted by the wallès up and down
Of hunting, and of shame-faced chastity.
There saw I how woeful Calistopè,
When that Dian was aggrieved with her,
Was turnèd from a woman to a bear,
And after was she made the lodèstar';
Thus was it painted, I can say no far':[2]
Her son is eke a star as men may see.
There saw I Dian turned into a tree.

. . . . .

There saw I Acteon a hart ymakèd,
For vengeance that he saw Dián all naked:
I saw how that his houndès have him caught
And fretten[3] him, for that they knew him nought.
Yet painted was a little furthermore
How Atalanta hunted the wild boar,
And Meleager, and many another mo',
For which Diana wrought them care and woe.
There saw I also many another story,
The which me list not drawen to memóry.
This goddess on a hart full high she sate,
With smallè houndès all about her feet.
And underneath her feet she had the moon,
Waxing it was, and shouldè wanen soon.
In gaudy green her statue clothèd was,
With bow in hand, and arrows in a case.
Her eyèn castè she full low adown,
There[4] Pluto hath his darkè regïoun.
A woman travailling was her beforn
But for her child so longê was unborn
Full piteously Lucina 'gan she call,
And saidè, "Help, for thou mayst best of all!"
Well could he paintè life-like, that it wrought:
With many a florin he the huës bought.

Now are the lists made; and Theseus, who, at his great cost, arrayed thus the temples and the theatres in every part—when it was done, liked the whole wondrously well. But I will cease a little of Theseus, and speak of Palamon and Arcite.

[1] Reverencing. [2] Farther. [3] Tear, devour. [4] Where.

The day approacheth for their tourney, when each man should bring a hundred knights to contest the battle, as I told you ; and to Athens, to hold their covenant, each hath brought a hundred knights, well armed at all points, for the war. And, certainly, many a man believed that never since the world began (to speak of the knighthood that was upon each side),

> As far as God hath makèd sea or land,

was there

> of so few so good a company.

For every wight that loved chivalry, and would with his good-will have an excelling

> name,
> Hath prayèd that he might be of that game,
> And well was him that thereto chosen was.

And if such a case happened to-morrow, ye know well that every lusty knight that loveth *par amour*, and hath his strength, would with his goodwill determine to be there, were it in England or anywhere else,

> To fightè for a lady, *Benedicite ;*
> It were a lusty[1] sightè for to see ;
> And right so fareden they with Palamon.

With him there went many a knight. Some will be armed in a habergeon,[2] and in a breastplate, and in a gipon[3] ; and some will have a pair of large plates. Some will have a Prussian shield or a target ; and some will be well armed about the legs and have an axe ; and some a mace of steel. There is no new fashion but that has been old. They were armed, as I have said to you, every one after his own opinion.

> There mayst thou see, coming with Palamon,
> Licurge himself, the greatè king of Thrace ;
> Black was his beard, and manly was his face.
> The circles of his eyen in his head,
> They glowèden betwix yellów and red,
> And like a griffon lookèd he about ;
> With combèd hairès on his browès stout ;
> His limbès great, his brawnès[4] hard and strong ;
> His shoulders broad, his armès round and long.

1 Pleasant, cheering.
2 A small coat of mail.
3 A short cassock.
4 Muscles.

And as the guisè was in his countrý,
Full high upon a chair of gold stood he,
With fourè whitè bullès in a trace.
Instead of coat-armóur on his harnéss,—
With nailès yellow, and bright as any gold,
He had a bearè skin, coal black for old.[1]
His longè hair ycomb'd behind his back ;
As any raven feather, it shone for black.
A wreath of gold, arm-great, and huge of weight,
Upon his head, set full of stonès bright,
Of finè rubies and of diamonds.
About his chairè wenten white alauns,[2]
Twenty and more, as great as any steer,[3]
To hunten at the lion or at the bear,
And followed him, with muzzle fast ybound,
Collared with gold, and tourettes[4] filèd round.
A hundred lordès had he in his rout[5]
Armèd full well, with heartès stern and stout.
With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The great Emetrius, the king of Inde,
Upon a steedè bay,[6] trappèd in steel,
Covered with cloth of gold diápred[7] wele,
Came riding like the god of Armès, Mars.
His coat-armóur was of a cloth of Tars,
Couchèd[8] of pearlès whitè, round and great.
His saddle was of burnt[9] gold new ybeat.

A short mantle hung upon his shoulders,—

Bretful[10] of rubies red—as fire sparklíng ;
His crispè hair like ringès was yrun,
And that was yellow, and glittering as the sun.
His nose was high, his eyen were citrine,[11]
His lippès round, his colour was sanguíne ;
A fewè freckles in his face ysprent[12]
Betwixen yellow and black,"

somewhat mingled ;—

And as a lion he his looking cast.

Of five and twenty years I reckon his age,—

His beard was well begunnen for to spring,
His voice was as a trumpet thundering ;

[1] For old, through age.
[2] A species of Spanish mastiff much esteemed in Italy in Chaucer's time. [3] Ox. [4] Rings for the leash. [5] Company.
[6] Or, to transpose the words, a bay steed.
[7] Diversified with flourishes.—*Tyrrwhitt.*
[8] Laid, or trimmed. [9] Burnished.
[10] Bretfull—topfull. [11] Of a citron colour. [12] Sprinkled.

Upon his head he weared of laurel green,
A garland fresh,

and pleasant for to see. Upon his hand he bare for his delight,—

An eagle tame, as any lily white.
A hundred lordès had he with him there,
All armèd, save their headès, in their gear,
Full richèly in allè manner thingès;
For trusteth well, that dukès, earlès, kingès,
Were gathered in this noble company,
For love and for increase of chivalry.
About the king there ran on every part,
Full many a tame lión and leöpart.

And in this wise, these lords, one and all, have come to the city, on Sunday, about prime, and alighted in the town. This Theseus, this duke, this worthy knight, when he had brought them into his city, and lodged them each according to his degree, feasteth them; and takes such pains to please and to do honour to them, that men even believed that no man's wit or condition might amend it. But as to the minstrelsy, the service at the feast, the great gifts to high and low, the rich array of the palace,—or as to who sate first or last upon the dais, what ladies were fairest, or danced best, or which of them could best carol and sing, or

Who mostè feelingly speakéth of love;
What hawkès sitten on the perch above,
What houndès lyen in the floor adown;

of all this, I will make no mention now, but proceed to the effect of my story: that appears to me the best. Now comes the point; and, if it so please you, hearken:—

The Sunday night, ere day began to spring,
When Palamon the larkè heardè sing,
Although it were not day by hourès two,
Yet sang the lark,—

and Palamon, at once, with holy heart, and with a high desire, rose to go on his pilgrimage to the benign and blissful Citherea, I mean Venus, honourable and worthy. And in her bower he walketh forth a few paces unto the lists, where her temple was, and down he kneeleth, and with humble cheer and sore heart he said,—

"Fairest of fair, O lady mine, Venús,
Daughter of Jove, and spouse to Vulcanus,

Thou gladder of the Mount of Citheron,
For thilkè love thou haddest to Adon',[1]
Have pity on my bitter tearès smart,
And take mine humble prayër to thine heart.
Alas! I have no language for to tell
Th' effectè nor the torment of mine hell;
Mine heartè may mine harmès not bewray;[2]
I am so cónfuse that I cannot say:
But mercy, lady bright! thou knowest wele
My thought, and seest what harmès that I feel.

Consider all this, and have pity on my pain, as wisely as I shall for evermore with all my might be thy true servant: . . . that I swear, if ye will but now help me. I care not to boast of arms.

Nor ask I not to-morrow to have victóry,
Nor rénown in this case, nor vainè glory
Of prize of armès, blowen up and down;
But I would have fully possession
Of Emily, and die in her servíce;
Find thou the manner how, and in what wise.

I care not which may be the best, to have victory over him, or he over me, so that I may but have my lady in mine arms. And for though Mars be the god of war, and you be Venus the goddess of love, your influence is so great in heaven, that if you please I shall certainly have my love.

Thy temple will I worship evermo',
And on thine altar, where I ride or go,
I will do sacrifice, and firès beat,[3]
And if ye will not so, my lady sweet,
Then pray I thee, to-morrow with a spear
That Arcita me through the heartè bear.
Then reck I not, when I have lost my life,
Though that Arcitè win her to his wife:
This is the effect and end of my prayére,
Give me my love, thou blissful lady dear!"

When Palamon had done his orison, he did sacrifice, and that at once most piteously, with all due circumstances, though I do not at present describe them. And at the last the statue of Venus shook, and made a sign; whereby he understood that his prayer was that day accepted. For though the sign showed delay, yet he knew well that his boon was granted,

And with glad heart he went[4] him home full soon.

[1] Adonis. [2] Betray. [3] Prepare, make. [4] Turned.

The third hour unequal[1] that Palamon began to go to the temple of Venus,

Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,
And to the temple of Dián 'gan hie ;
Her maidens that she thither with her lad,
Full readily[2] with them the fire they had,
Th' incénse, the clothès, and the remenant all,
That to the sacrificè 'longen shall,
The hornès full of mead, as is the guise ;
There lacketh nought to do her sacrifice,—
Smoking the temple, full of clothès[3] fair,—
This Emily with heartè debonair,
Her body wash'd with water of a well.

But how she did her rite I dare not say, except in generals :

Her brightè hair was combed, untressèd all ;
A coroun of a green oak, cerial,[4]
Upon her head was set, full fair and meet.

[1] "In the astrological system, the day, from sunrise to sunset, and the night, from sunset to sunrise, being each divided into twelve hours, it is plain that the hours of the day and night were never equal, except just at the equinoxes. The hours attributed to the planet were of this unequal sort." Taking the seven planets in the following order of rotation, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars, "the first hour of the Sunday, reckoning from sunrise, belonged to the Sun, the planet of the day, the second to Venus, the third to Mercury, etc. ; and, continuing this method of allotment, we shall find that the twenty-second hour also belonged to the Sun, and the twenty-third to Venus ; so that the hour of Venus really was, as Chaucer says, two hours before sunrise on the following day. Accordingly, we are told that the third hour after Palemon set out for the temple of Venus the sun rose, and Emilie began to go to the temple of Diane. It is not said that this was the hour of Diane or the Moon, but it really was ; for, as we have just seen, the twenty-third hour of Sunday belonging to Venus, the twenty-fourth must be given to Mercury, and the first hour of Monday falls in course to the Moon, the presiding planet of that day. After this Arcite is described as walking to the temple of Mars [p. 207] in the next hour of Mars, that is, the fourth hour of the day."—*Tyrrwhitt.*

[2] Ready—prepared.

[3] Hangings.

[4] This appears to refer to the species called *cerres*—the Turkey Oak—one of the most graceful of all the known kinds, and which is very common all over the south-east of Europe. It may be observed that "the sacrificers were accustomed to wear a garland of the leaves of the plant that was dedicated to the divinity to whom the sacrifices were offered." The oak was dedicated to Diana, so Emily wears "the green oak, cerial."

Two fires she began then to prepare on the altar, and to perform other rites as men may see in the writings of Statius of Thebes, and in other old books. When the fire was kindled, with piteous cheer, she spake thus unto Diana :—

"O chastè goddess of the woodès green,
To whom both heaven, and earth, and sea is seen ;
Queen of the regne[1] of Pluto, dark and low,
Goddess of maidens, that mine heart hast know[2]
Full many a year, ye wot what I desire,—

keep me from thy vengeance and thy rage, that Acteon suffered from so cruelly. Chaste goddess, thou well knowest that I desire to remain a maiden all my life,

Ne never will I be no love ne wife.

I am yet, thou knowest, a maiden of thy company, and love hunting, and walking in the wild woods, and not to become a wife or a mother.

Nought will I know the company of man.
Now help me, lady, since ye may and can.
For those three formès that thou hast in thee,
And Palamon that hath such love to me,
And eke Arcite that loveth me so sore,
This grace I prayè thee withouten more,

that you will

sendè love and peace betwixt them two ;
And from me turn away their heartès so,
That all their hotè love and their desire,
And all their busy torment and their fire,
Be quench'd, or turnèd in another place.
And if so be thou wilt do me no grace,
Or if my destiny be shapèd so
That I shall needès have one of them two,

then,

send me him that most desireth me.
Behold, goddéss of cleanè chastity,
The bitter tears that on my cheekès fall.
Since thou art maid, and keeper of us all,
My maidenhood thou keep, and well conserve,
And while I live a maid, I will thee serve."

The fires burnt clear upon the altar whilst Emily thus prayed, but suddenly she saw a strange sight. One of the fires was instantly quenched, then lighted again ; and immediately after the other fire was also quenched, and was

—— all agone.

[1] Realm. [2] Known.

And as it quenched it made a whistling, as these wet brands do when they burn. And at the end of the brands

outran anon,
As it were bloody droppès many one,
For which so sore aghast was Emily,
That she was well nigh mad, and 'gan to cry:
For she ne wistè what it signified.
But onèly for fearè thus she cried,
And wept, that it was piteous to hear.
And therewithal Diana 'gan appear
With bow in hand, right as a huntèress,
And said—"Ah daughter, stint thine heaviness.
Among the goddès high it is affirmed,
And by etèrn' word written and confirmed,
Thou shalt be wedded unto one of tho'[1]
That have for thee so muchel care and woe;
But unto which of them may I not tell.
Farewell, for here I may no longer dwell.

The fires that burn on my altar have declared unto thee the issue of thy adventure of love." And with that word the arrows in the quiver of the goddess clattered fast and rang as she went forth and vanished. For which Emily was much astonished, and said, "What amounteth this, alas? I put myself in thy protection, Diana, and in thy disposition!" And then she goeth home by the nearest way.

The next hour of Mars that followed this,[2] Arcite walked forth to the temple of the fierce God to do his sacrifice with all the rites of his pagan manner.

With piteous heart and high devotïon,
Right thus to Mars he said his orison:
"O strongè God, that in the regnès[3] cold
Of Thracè honoúr'd art, and lord yhold,
And hast in every regne, and every land
Of armès all the bridle in thine hand,
And them fortúnest as thee lust devise,
Accept of me my piteous sacrifice!
If so be that my youthè may deserve,
And that my might be worthy for to serve
Thy godhead, that I may be one of thine,
Then pray I thee to rue upon my pine.

. . . . . .

By the sorrow that was in thine own heart when thy love for Venus was discovered by Vulcan, have pity also on my grief. . . . . I am, as thou knowest, young and ignorant, and, as I believe, with love hurt more than ever was any other living

[1] Those. [2] See note on page 205. [3] Realms.

creature. For she that makes me endure all this woe recks not whether I sink or float. And well I know, before she will show me mercy, I must with strength win her in the place. And well I know, without help or grace from thee, my strength will avail nothing.

Then help me, Lord, to-morrow in my battle, for the sake of the fire that once burned in thine own breast, as well as for the fire that now burneth me. So act, that I to-morrow may have

the victóry;
Mine be the travail; all thine be the glory.

Thy sovereign temple I will most honour of any place, and always labour most in thy strong craft, and to please thee. And in thy temple I will hang my banner, and all the arms of my company; and evermore, until that day I die, I will find eternal fire to burn before thee. And I will also bind myself to this vow. My beard, my hair, that hangeth low down, that never yet felt the touch of razor or of shears, I will give to thee, and be thy true servant while I live.

Now, lord, have ruth upon my sorrows sore;
Give me the victory, I ask no more."

As Arcite the strong ceased his prayer, the rings that hung on the temple-door, and also the doors, clattered full fast, and Arcite was somewhat alarmed. The fires burnt so brightly upon the altar,

That it 'gan all the temple for to light;

a sweet smell was given forth by the ground; and Arcite immediately raising his hand, cast more incense into the fire, and performed further rites; and, at last,

The statue of Mars began his hauberk ring;
And with that sound he heard a murmuring
Full low and dim, that saidè thus—"Victóry;"
For which he gave to Mars honóur and glory.

And thus with joy and hope to fare well, Arcite soon returned to his lodging, as glad as bird

is of the brightè sun.

And anon there began such strife in heaven for the granting of these signs between Venus, the goddess of love, and Mars, the stern god armipotent, that Jupiter was busily employed to stop it; until

the palè Saturnus the cold,
That knew so many[1] of ádventurès old,
Found in his old experience and art

the means to please all parties. As it is truly said, age hath great advantage; in age is both wisdom and custom; men may the old outrun but not outrede.[2] Saturn anon, to cause strife and dread to cease (although it is against his nature) began to find a remedy. "My dear daughter Venus," quoth Saturn, "my career, that hath so wide a scope, is more powerful than any man knoweth of.

Mine is the drenching in the sea so wan;
Mine is the prison in the darkè cote;
Mine is the strangling, and hanging by the throat;
The murmur, and the churlès rébelling,
The groining,[3] and the privy empoisoning.
I do vengeánce, and plain correctïon
Whiles I dwell in the sign of the lión.
Mine is the ruin of the highè halls,
The falling of the towers, and the walls,
Upon the miner or the carpenter.
I slew Sampsón in shaking the pillár.
And mine be eke the maladïes cold,
The darkè treason, and the castès[4] old.
My looking is the father of pestilence.

Now weep no more. I shall take diligent care that Palamon, who is thine own knight, shall have his lady, as thou hast promised him. Nevertheless, Mars, too, shall help his knight. Betwixt you two there must be sometimes peace:

All[5] be ye not of one complexïon
That ilke day causeth such divisïon,
I am thine ayel,[6] ready at thy will;
Weep thou no morè, I thy lust[7] fulfil."

Now will I stint of the gods above, Mars and Venus, and tell you plainly as I can of the effect for which I began.

Great was the feast in Athens on the day of the combat. And also the lusty season of that May made every one to be in such pleasure,

That all the Monday jousten they, and dance,
And spenden it in Venus' high servíce.

[1] So much. [2] Outstrip in council or wisdom. [3] Discontent.
[4] Contrivances—plots. [5] Though. [6] Grandfather.
[7] Pleasure, desire.

But because that they should rise early on the morrow to see the fight, they went at night to rest:

And on the morrow when the day 'gan spring,—
Of horse and harness, noise and clattering,
There was in the hostélries all about.
And to the palace rode there many a rout
Of lordès, upon steeds and on palfréys.
There mayst thou see devising of harnéss[1]
So uncouth[2] and so richè wrought and well
Of goldsmithry, of brouding,[3] and of steel;
The shieldès bright, testerès,[4] and trappúres,[5]
Gold-beaten helms, hauberks, and coat-armóurs;
Lordès in paramount on their coursérs,
Knightès of retinue, and eke squiérs,
Nailing the spears, and helmets buckèling,
Girding[6] of shieldès, with lainérs[7] lacíng;
There, as need is, they were nothing idle:
There foaming steedès on the golden bridle
Gnawing; and fast the armourers alsó,
With file and hammer, pricking to and fro;
Yeomen on foot, and knavès[8] many one,
With shortè stavès, thick as they may gone;
Pipès, trumpéts, nakéres,[9] and clarioüns
That in the battle blowen bloody souns;
The palace full of people up and down,
Here three, there ten, holding their questioün,
Divining[10] of these Theban knightès two:
Some saiden thus, some said it shall be so;
Some helden with him with the blackè beard,
Some with the ballèd,[11] some with the thick-haired;
Some said *he* lookèd grim, and wouldè fight;
He hath a sparth[12] of twenty pounds of weight.

Thus was the hall full of divining long after the sun began to rise. The great Theseus, who from sleep is waked with minstrelsy and noise of music, keeps yet the chamber of his rich palace until the Theban knights were both alike brought in honour to the palace.

The duke is seated at a window, arrayed as though he were an enthroned god. The people press forward quickly to see

[1] Armour.
[2] Uncommon—fanciful—elegant; in short, as nearly as possible the very opposite of the things intimated by the same word at present.
[3] Embroidery. [4] Head-pieces. [5] Trappings of the horses.
[6] Rubbing, polishing. [7] Straps, or thongs. [8] Commonfolk.
[9] A kind of brazen drum. [10] Guessing, conjecturing.
[11] Bald. [12] Axe, or halbert.

him, and to do reverence to him, and also to hearken to his command and his decision.

A herald on a scaffold cried "Ho!" till that the noise of the people was done; and when he saw all were silent, he thus showeth the mighty duke's will:—

"The lord of his high prudence, hath considered that it were destruction to gentle blood to fight in this undertaking after the manner of mortal battle. In order, therefore, to prevent death, he will modify his first purpose. No man, on pain of the loss of life, shall either send or bring any manner of shot,[1] or pole-axe, or short knife, into the lists. Neither any short sword with biting points, shall any man draw, or bear by his side. Neither shall any man ride unto his fellow more than one course with a sharp spear. He may thrust, if he pleases, on foot, to defend himself. And he that is at fault shall be taken, not slain, and brought unto the stake that shall be set up on either side. There he must be taken by force, and there he must abide. And if it so happen that the chieftain on either side be taken or slain, the tourneying shall last no longer.

God speedè you: go forth, and lay on fast;
With long sword, and with macè fight your fill;
Go now your way: this is the lordès will."

The voice of the people touched to the heavens, so loudly and merrily did they cry,

"God savè such a lord that is so good.
He willeth no destruction of blood!"
Up go the trumpets and the melody;
And to the listès ride the company,
By ordinancè, through the city large,
Hanging with cloth of gold, and not with serge.

Like a lord rides this noble duke, with the two Thebans on either side; and after, rode the queen and Emily, and after them another company, and so on in the order of their degree. And thus they pass through the city, and reach the list betimes, before it was yet fully prime of the day.

When set was Theseus full rich and high,
Hypolita the queen, and Emily,
And other ladies in degrees about,
Unto the seatès presseth all the rout.
And westward, thorough the gatès under Mart'[2]
Arcite, and eke the hundred of his part,

[1] Darts, arrows, etc. [2] Mars. See p. 198, above.

With banners red, is entered right anon ;
And in that selvè moment Palamon
Is, under Venus, eastward in the place,
With banner white, and hardy cheer and face.

In all the world, though we seek them up and down, there were never two such companies—so even, and so alike. There were none so wise as to be able to say that any had the advantage of others in worthiness, estate, or age ; so equally, to guess by their appearance, were they chosen. In two fair ranks they prepare themselves. When every one of their names had been read over, to show that in their numbers there was no guile,

Then were the gatès shut, and criès loud,
"Do now your devoir, youngè knightès proud ! "
The heralds left their pricking up and down.
Now ringedè the trump and clarioún.
There is no more to say, but east and west,
In go the spearès sadly[1] in the rest ;
In go'th the sharpè spur into the side.
There see men who can joust and who can ride ;
There shiver shaftès upon shoulders thick ;
He feeleth through the heartè-spoon the prick.
Up springen spearès twenty foot on height ;
Out go the swordès as the silver bright ;
The helmets there to-hewen and to-shred ;
Out burst the blood, with sternè streamès red :
With mighty maces the bonès they to-brest.[2]
He through the thickest of the throng 'gan threst.[3]
There stumble steedès strong, and down go'th all ;
He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
He feyneth[4] on his foot with a truncheóun,
And him hurtéleth[5] with his horse adown.
He through the body hurt is, and since take,
Maugre[6] his head, and brought unto the stake,
As foreword[7] was, right there he must abide.
Another led is on that other side.

And some time Theseus causes them to rest, to refresh themselves, and to drink if they please. Often, during the day, have these two Thebans met together, and wrought each other woe : each of them hath unhorsed the other.

There was no tiger in the vale of Golaphay,
When that her whelp is stole when it is lite,[8]
So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite,

[1] Firmly, steadily. [2] Burst. [3] Thrust. [4] Pusheth, lasheth.
[5] Hurleth. [6] In spite of. [7] Agreement. [8] Little.

For jealous heart, upon this Palamon ;
Ne in Belmárie there n' is so fell lión
That hunted is, or is for hunger wood,[1]
Ne of his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to slay his foe Arcite :
The jealous strokès on their helmets bite ;
Outrunneth blood on both their sidès rede.[2]

Some time an end there is on every deed ;

And ere the sun went to rest, the strong King Emetrius began to attack Palamon as he was fighting with Arcite,

And made his sword, deep in his flesh to bite.

And by the force of twenty is he taken, unyielding, and drawn towards the stake ; and in the rescue of Palamon, the strong King Lycurgus is borne down ; and King Emetrius, for all his strength, is forced out of his saddle a sword's length, Palamon so struck him before he was taken. But all for nothing : he was brought to the stake.

His hardy heartè might him helpen nought.
He must abiden, when that he was caught,
By force, and eke by compositïon.
Who sorroweth now, but woful Palamon,
That mustè no more go again to fight?

And when Theseus saw this, he cried aloud to the people who were thus fighting, every one of them,

"Ho! no more, for it is done!
I will be truè judge, and not party.
Arcite of Thebès shall have Emily,
That hath by his fortúnè her ywon."

Immediately there began such a noise of people,

For joy of this, so loud and high withal,
It seemèd that the listès wouldè fall.
What can now fairè Venus do above?
What saith she now? what doth this queen of love?
But weepeth so, for wanting of her will,
Till that her tearès in the listès fill.[3]
She said, "I am ashamèd doubtèless."
Saturnus saidè, "Daughter, hold thy peace :
Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his boon,
And by minè head, thou shalt be easèd soon."

The trumpeters, with the loud minstrelsy—the heralds that so loudly cry and yell—are in all their joy for the success of Dan

[1] Mad. [2] Red. [3] Fall.

Arcite. But hearken to me: the noise is stopped a little; a miracle there befell anon. This fierce Arcite hath taken off his helmet,

> And on his courser for to show his face,
> He pricketh endlong in the largè place,
> Looking upwárd upon his Emily;
> And she against him cast a friendly eye
> (For women, as to speaken in commúne,
> They follow all the favour of Fortúne).
> And was all his in cheer, as his in heart.
> Out of the ground a Fury infernal start,
> From Pluto sent, at réquest of Satúrn,
> For which his horse for fearè 'gan to turn,
> And leapt aside, and founder'd as he leap;
> And ere that Arcitè may takè keep,
> He pitched him on the pommel[1] of his head,
> That in that place he lay as he were dead.
> His breast to-broken with his saddle-bow.
> As black he lay as any coal or crow,
> So was the blood yrunnen in his face.

Immediately he was borne out, with sore heart, to the palace of Theseus. There he was cut out of his harness, and brought softly and quickly to a bed, for he was yet alive, and in his senses,

> and alway crying after Emily.

Duke Theseus, with his train, is come home to Athens, his city, in great solemnity and bliss; for notwithstanding this adventure had befallen, he would not have all discomforted. And men said also that Arcite should not die: he should be healed of his hurt. And of another thing they were glad,—that of all the combatants there were none slain, though they were sorely hurt, and especially one, whose breast-bone had been pierced by a spear.

> To other woundès, and to broken arms,
> Some hadden salvès, and some hadden charms,

And pharmacies of herbs. And also they drank of sage in order to save their lives. This noble duke,

> As he well can,
> Comfórteth and honóureth every man,
> And madè revel all the longè night
> Unto the strangè lordès, as was right.

And truly there was no discomfort held there, but [all was as

[1] The top.

usual] at jousts and tourneys; for there was no [humiliating] defeat: falling is but an adventure. And to be led by force unto a stake, unyielding, and to be taken by twenty knights—one person all alone, without more—and hurried forth by arms, feet, and toe, and also his steed driven with staves by footmen, both yeomen and also servants,—[all this] was imputed to Palamon no villainy; no man held it cowardly. Shortly, Theseus, to stop all rancour and envy, let cry the praise and honour

as well of one side as of other,
And every sidè like as other's brother;
And gave them giftès after their degree,
And fully held a feastè dayès three;

and conveyed the kings, in a worthy manner, out of the town to a considerable distance.

And home went every man the rightè way.
There was no more but "Farewell!" "Have good day!"

The breast of Arcite swells, and the pain increaseth more and more at his heart. The clotted blood, in spite of the skill of the leech, corrupteth and remains in his body; as neither bleeding nor cupping, nor drink of herbs may help him. The natural expulsive or animal virtue [of the system] may not throw off nor expel the venom. The pipes of his lungs began to swell, and every muscle downwards in his breast is destroyed with the venom and the corruption. Neither vomit nor laxative can he obtain, in order to save his life. The whole region is burst.

Nature hath now no domination:
And certainly, where nature will not werche,[1]
Farewell physic; go bear the man to church.

The long and short of the matter is, that Arcite must die. He therefore sends for Emily and for Palamon, that was his dear cousin, and thus spake to them:—

"Nought may the woful spirit in mine heart
Declare one point of all my sorrow's smart
To you my lady that I lovè most,
But I bequeath the service of my ghost[2]
To you aboven every creäture,
Since that my lifè may no longer 'dure.
Alas the woe! alas the painès strong
That I for you have suffered, and so long!
Alas the death! alas mine Emily!
Alas! departing[3] of our company!

[1] Work. [2] Spirit. [3] Separation.

Alas mine heartès queen! alas my wife!
Mine heartès lady, ender of my life!
What is this world? what asketh men to have?—
Now with his love, now in his coldè grave
Alone,—withouten any company!
Farewell my sweet—farewell mine Emily!
And softè take me in your armès tway
For love of God, and hearkeneth what I say.
I have here with my cousin Palamon
Had strife and rancour many a day ygone
For love of you, and eke for jealousy;
And Jupiter, so wis[1] my soulè gie,
To speaken of a servant properly,
With allè circumstánces truëly,
That is to say, truth, honour, and knighthéad,
Wisdom, humbless, estate, and high kindréd,
Freedom, and all that 'longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soulè part,
As in this world right now ne know I none
So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
That serveth you, and will do all his life.
And if that ye shall ever be a wife,
Forget not Palamon, that gentle man."

And with that word his speech began to fail. For from his feet up to his breast arrived the cold of death that had overtaken him. And yet, moreover, in his two arms the vital strength is lost, and utterly gone. The intellect alone, that dwelled in his sick and sore heart

Gan failen, when the heartè feltè death;
Dusking his eyen two, and failèd breath:
But on his lady yet he cast his eye;
His lastè word was, "Mercy, Emily!"

His spirit changed house, and went—to that place, from whence, having never myself come, I cannot tell aught of. I cease therefore. I am no divine, and I find nothing about souls in this register. And even though they had written where souls dwell, I have no desire to tell their opinions:—Arcite is cold; let Mars guide his soul thither.

Shriek'd Emily, and howleth Palamon;
And Thesëus his sister took anon
Swooning, and bare her from the corpse away.

What boots it to prolong the time by telling how she wept both evening and morning. Women in such cases have such sorrow when that their husbands are gone from them, that for

[1] Surely.

the most part they grieve in this way, or else fall into such a malady that at last they certainly die.

> Infinite be the sorrows and the tears
> Of oldè folk, and folk of tender years,
> So great a weeping was there none certaín
> When Hector was ybrought, all fresh yslain,
> As that there was for death of this Thebán,
> For him there weepeth bothè child and man.
> At Troy, alas! the pity that was there,
> Scratching of cheekès, rending eke of hair,
> "Why wouldest thou be dead?" these women cry,
> "And haddest gold enough, and Emily?"

No man might gladden the Duke Theseus except his old father Egeus,

> That knew this worldès transmutatiön,
> As he had seen it turnen up and down,
> Joy after woe, and woe aftér gladnéss;

and he showed Theseus examples and similar cases.

> "Right as there diëd never man," quoth he,
> "That he ne lived in earth in some degree;
> Yet so there livèd never man," he seyd,
> "In all this world, that sometime he ne deyd.[1]
> This world n' is but a thoroughfare full of woe,
> And we be pilgrims passing to and fro:
> Death is an end of every worldly sore."

And in addition to all this, he said much more to the effect that he should wisely exhort the people to re-comfort themselves.

Duke Theseus, with busy care, now considers where the sepulchre of good Arcite may be best and most honourably, for one of his degree, made. In the end he determines that there, where first Arcite and Palamon had the battle between them for love,—in that selfsame grove, sweet and green, where Arcite had poured forth his amorous desires, his complaints, and felt the hot fires of love, he would make the fire wherein to accomplish all the rites of burial. Immediately he commanded them to hack and hew the old oaks, and lay them in a row, in bundles, well prepared to burn. With swift feet his officers run and ride immediately at his commandment. And after this Theseus sent for a bier,

> and it all overspread
> With cloth of gold, the richest that he had,

[1] Died.

And of the samè suit he clad Arcite.
Upon his handès were his glovès white,
Eke on his head a crown of laurel green,
And in his hand a sword full bright and keen.
He laid him bare the visage on the bier,
Therewith he wept, that pity was to hear.
And, for the people shouldè see him all,
When it was day he brought them to the hall,
That roareth of the crying and the soun.
Then came this woful Theban, Palamon,
With floating beard, and rugged ashy hairs,
In clothès black, ydroppèd all with tears,
And (passing other of weeping) Emily,
The ruefullest of all the company.

And inasmuch as that the service should be the more noble and rich, in accordance with Arcite's rank, Duke Theseus caused three steeds to be led forth, with trappings of glittering steel, and covered with the arms of Dan Arcite. And upon the steeds, great and white, there sat folk ; of whom one bore his shield, another held up his spear in his hands, the third bore with him his Turkish bow, the case and harness of which were of burnished gold. With sorrowful cheer they rode forth a short distance towards the grove.

The noblest of the Greeks present carried the bier upon their shoulders, with slow pace and with eyes red and wet, through the city, by the principal street, that was all hung with black. And, wondrously high, the street was covered over with the same. On the right hand went the old Egeus, on the other side the Duke ; with vessels of fine gold in their hands, full of honey, milk, and blood, and wine ; also Palamon, with a great company, and afterwards woeful Emily, with fire in her hand, as was then the custom, to do the office of funeral service. There was high labour, and great preparation, at the service of the making of that fire, that with his green top reached the heavens, whilst its arms stretched to a breadth of twenty fathoms ; that is to say, the boughs extended so far. Of straw there had been first laid many a load. But how the fire was raised to such a height, or as to the names by which the trees were known,

As oak, fir, birch, aspe,[1] alder, helm,[2] poplére,
Willow, elm, plane, ash, box, chestnut, lime, laurére,[3]
Maple, thorn, beech, hazel, yew, whipul tree,

or,

How they were fell'd shall not be told for me ;
Nor how the goddès rannen up and down

[1] The aspen, so well known for its quivering leaves.
[2] The evergreen oak. [3] Laurel [4] *Unknown.*

Disherited of their habitatïoün,
In which they whilom woned[1] in rest and peace,
Nymphès, faunès, and hamadryades ;
Nor how the beastès and the birdès all
Fledden for fearè when the wood was fall.
Nor how the ground aghast was of the light,
That was not wont to see no sunnè bright ;
Nor how the fire was couchèd[2] first with stre,[3]
And then with dryè stickès cloven a-three,
And then with greenè wood and spicery,
And then with cloth of gold and with pierrïe;[4]
And garlands hanging with full many a flower ;
The myrrh, th' incénse with al so sweet odóur ;
Nor how Arcitè lay among all this,
Nor what richéss about his body is ;
Nor how that Emily, as was the guise,
Put in the fire of funeral servïce ;
Nor how she swoonèd when she made the fire,
Nor what she spake, nor what was her desire ;
Nor what jewéls men in the fire then cast,
When that the fire was great, and burntè fast ;
Nor how some cast their shield, and some their spear,
And of their vestiments which that they wear ;
And cuppès full of wine, and milk, and blood,
Unto the fire, that burnt as it were wood ;[5]
Nor how the Greekès with a hugè rout
Three timès riden all the fire about,
Upon the left hand, with a high shoutíng,
And thrïes with their spearès clattering ;
And thrïes how the ladies 'gan to cry ;
Nor how that led was homeward Emily ;
Nor how Arcite is burnt to ashes cold ;

nor how the lich-wake was held all that night ; nor how the Greeks play. I delay not to describe these wake-plays ; nor who wrestled best naked, anointed with oil, nor who bore him best without these advantages ; I will not tell either how they have all gone home to Athens after the play is done, but shortly go to the point, and make an end of my long tale.

By process, and by length of certain years,
All stinted[6] is the mourning and the tears
Of Greekès, by one general assent.

Then, it seems, there was a parliament held at Athens upon certain points and cases, among which points an alliance with

[1] Dwelled. [2] Laid. [3] Straw. [4] Precious stones.
[5] Mad. [6] Stopped.

certain countries was spoken of, as also of receiving from the Thebans full submission. This noble Theseus, therefore, sends for the gentle Palamon, who knew not the cause, nor why, but came in his black clothes, sorrowfully, to the high commandment. Then Theseus sent for Emily.

When they were seated, and the whole place was hushed, and when Theseus had remained for a time, before any word came from his wise breast, with his eyes fixed as was his custom, and with a sad visage, he sighed again and again, and afterwards thus he spake his will.

"The firstè Mover of the cause above,
When he first made the fairè chain of love,
Great was the effect, and high was his intent.
Well wist he why, and what thereof he meant;
For with that fairè chain of love he bound
The fire, the air, the water, and the lond
In certain boundès that they may not flee:
That samè prince and mover eke (quoth he)
Hath 'stablished in this wretched world a-down,
Certainè dayès and duration
To all that are engendered in this place,
Over the whichè day, they may not pace,
All may they yet those dayès well abridge.

No authority need be cited, for it is proved by experience, but I wish to explain my decision. Men, then, may by this order discern well that the Mover is stable and eternal. Men (fools only excepted) know well that each part is derived from its whole. For nature hath not taken his commencement from a part or fragment of a thing, but of a thing that is perfect and stable; and which thence descending [or degenerating] becomes corruptible. And therefore in his wise provision, he hath so well guarded his ordinances, that species of things and progress shall endure by successions, not be in themselves eternal. That this is the truth thou mayest understand even by what the eye sees.

Lo! the oak, that hath so longè nourishing
From timè that it 'ginneth first to spring,
And hath so long a life, as we may see,
Yet at the lastè wasted is the tree.
Considereth eke, how that the hardè stone
Under our foot, on which we tread and gone,[1]
Yet wasteth it, as it li'th by the way.
The broadè river some time waxeth drey.[2]

[1] Go. [2] Dry

The greatè townès see we wane and wend ;
Then may ye see that all thing hath an end.

Of man and woman we see also that they must needs be in one term or the other, that is to say,

in youth or elles age
He must be dead, the King, as shall a page ;
Some in his bed, some in the deepè sea,
Some in the largè field, as men may see ;
There helpeth nought, all goeth thilkè way ;
Then may I well say that all thing shall dey.[1]

Who maketh this but Jupiter, the king ? who is prince, and cause of all ?—converting all into his proper will, from which, to say truth, it is derived. And against this it avails not for any living creature of any rank to strive.

Then is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
To maken virtue of necessity.

and take that well which we cannot decline ; and which is due to us all. And whoso murmureth aught commits a folly, and is a rebel to Him who guides everything. And certainly a man hath the most honour to die in his flower and excellence, and when he is sure of his good name. Then hath he dishonoured neither his friend nor himself.

And gladder ought his friend be of his death,
When with honour is yielden up his breath,
Than when his name appallèd[2] is for age,
For all forgotten is his vassalage.

Then is it best, for a worthy reputation, to die when a man's name is at the best. The contrary of all this is wilfulness. Why do we murmur ? why have we gloom that good Arcite, the flower of chivalry, is departed with duty and honour,

Out of this foulè prison of this life ?

Why are his cousin and his wife here, who love him so well, in discontent concerning his welfare ? Can he thank them ? Nay, God knows, never a bit. They offend both his soul and themselves ; and yet they may not amend their desires ! How may I conclude of this long series, but that after sorrow I advise that we be merry and thank Jupiter for all his grace ; and before we depart from hence, I advise that we make

[1] Die. [2] Weak, feeble.

of two sorrows one perfect and everlasting joy. And look! where there is now here most sorrow, I will begin and make amendment.

"Sister," quoth he, "this is my full assent,
With all the advice here of my parliament,
That gentle Palamon, your owen knight,
That serveth you with heart, and will, and might,
And ever hath done since ye first him knew,
That ye shall of your grace upon him rue,
And take him for your husband and for lord;
Lend me your hand, for this is our accord.

Let us now see your womanly pity. He is a king's brother's son, pardie; and though he were a poor batchelor, since he hath served you so many a year, and hath had for you such great adversity, it must be considered, believe me; for gentle mercy ought to exceed mere justice."

Then said he thus to Palamon the knight:
"I trow there needeth little sermoning
To maken you assenten to this thing.
Come near, and take your lady by the hand."

And shortly the bond of matrimony was made between them by all the counsel of the baronage; and thus

with bliss and eke with melody
Hath Palamon ywedded Emily.
And God, that all this widè world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it dear ybought;
For now is Palamon, in all his weal
Living in bliss, richéssè, and in hele.[1]
And Emily him loveth so tenderly,
And he her serveth all so gentlely,
That never was there wordès them between
Of jealousy,

nor of other evil.

Thus endeth Palamon and Emily.

[1] Health.

REMARKS ON THE 'KNIGHT'S TALE.'

HAUCER took the story that forms the subject of the 'Knight's Tale' mainly from Boccaccio[1] and slightly from the older author, Statius, and Dryden took the same story from Chaucer. It may tend somewhat to illustrate generally the character of the first great English poet to compare his 'Knight's Tale' with the 'Teseide' of the Italian poet on the one hand, and with the 'Knight's Tale' of Dryden on the other.

Boccaccio devotes the two first books to the mere antecedents of the story, as the war with the Amazons; the protracted stay of Theseus in their country after his marriage with the Amazonian Queen, Hypolita; his return towards Athens; the meeting with the ladies who have lost their husbands; the campaign against Creon; and the finding and bringing back with Theseus to Athens the two young knights: and it is only with the third book that the story really begins, by the introduction of Emily into the garden that surrounds the prison of Palamon and Arcite. Chaucer dismisses the whole of these in some two hundred lines.

Boccaccio makes Arcite see Emily first; Chaucer gives that advantage to Palamon, and thereby makes the commencement harmonize better with the end of the story, as well as with the more gentle loving character that the English poet has assigned to the successful rival. But perhaps one of the most remarkable of all the features of the contrast between the poets, is their view of the effect upon the two knights of their mutually seeing and loving Emily; in Boccaccio they are the quintessence of amiability to each other; and one is tempted to ask why the story should continue; it really does not seem as though it would matter much—even to the parties themselves—which of the two should obtain the lady; but turn to Chaucer, and who will forget the scene after once reading it? It is a grand and difficult position—that of two very dearly attached friends suddenly changed by the jealousies of love into fierce and unappeasable enemies; but most grandly and triumphantly does Chaucer pass through it. Even in little touches, the difference between the two poets is no less strikingly apparent. Chaucer, with consummate art, seeing that the whole tenor of the story, which is in strict accordance with the

[1] The passages englished more or less directly from Boccaccio are marked by Mr. Henry Ward in the Chaucer Society's Six Text print of the Tale. The description of Arcite's death is precisely parallel (Skeat) to that of Atys in Statius's *Thebais*, viii. 637–651.

feelings and customs of the middle ages, does not admit of the result being determined by the will or wishes of Emily, keeps her shining like a star over the lovers to guide their wandering barks, but also almost as distant as a star. Boccaccio comparatively vulgarises her by allowing it to be understood that she sees the lovers at their prison windows as she plays in the garden, and is not displeased with their admiration.

Arcite, by the friendly interposition of Perithous, is set free ; but, lover like, has no sooner escaped the evil he dreaded of confinement, than he repines at the other evil—his absence from the place where he might at least hope to see his mistress. He determines to return. Boccaccio makes this a difficult and circuitous business. Arcite must first go into the service of Menelaus at Mycenæ, then into that of Peleus at Ægina, and so at last he reaches the court of Theseus of Athens, and takes the same position there ; and it must be acknowledged all this suits very well with the patient, amiable, not particularly anxious young gentleman that Boccaccio loves to describe. Chaucer, however, brings his Arcite back at once to the place where he wishes to be. Of course Chaucer still keeps Emily aloof from any intimate personal knowledge of Arcite ! Boccaccio makes her know him, when all else are ignorant of his true character.

The same directness and artistic skill characterise Chaucer's management of the great scene in the grove ; the same want of both qualities characterises Boccaccio's. In the former, Arcite, in prosperity, comes as a lover seeking solitude, and there, whole pouring out his amorous complaints, is overheard by the miserable Palamon, who has the very night before broken prison—a position of the most stirring and suggestive nature ; but in the latter it is frittered away by the complicity of the arrangements required for its production. There must be a servant, one Pamphilo, to overhear Arcite in the grove, and to bring the news to Palamon, and to induce him to try to break prison in order to get out to fight the rival. And then when they do meet, it is quite a lesson in politeness to see their courtesy towards each other, their patience in expostulation—and, even at the last, their reluctance to fight. How unlike is all this to the chivalrous feeling that prompts Chaucer's Arcite to find food and arms for his half-famished and totally undefended rival before fighting him, or the terrible passions that actuate both when they do fight, as described in these most magnificent lines :—

> Then changen gan the colour in their face,
> Right as the hunter in the regne[1] of Thrace,

[1] Realm, or country.

That standeth in the gappè with a spear,
When hunted is the lion or the bear,
And heareth him come rushing in the greves,[1]
And breaking both the boughès and the leaves,
And thinks "Here comes my mortal enemy;
Withouten fail, he must be dead or I.

Theseus interrupts their fight; and the more solemn combat with a hundred knights a-side is determined upon; these are collected, and Boccaccio liberally gives us the individual descriptions one after another of no inconsiderable portion of the whole. Chaucer gives but two portraits—devotes his whole strength to them, and the result is what might have been expected—those portraits are among the especial gems of the poem. And as we read of Lycurgus, wrapped in his bear's skin, coal black for age, standing on high in his car of gold, and the great white dogs that follow him,—or of Emetrius, who

as a lion, he his looking cast,

we find our respect for the remainder of the knights raised to a high pitch by the contemplation of two such examples.

The day of the combat arrives, and the lovers go to the temple to offer up their prayers. Boccaccio wishes to describe the temples, so does Chaucer; the one therefore *personifies the prayers*, in order that they may go severally to the temple of Mars in Thrace, and of Venus in Mount Citheron, and the poet describes what they see there; the other raises our conception of the importance of the occasion, and of the magnificence of Theseus, by making the latter build temples to Mars, Venus, and Diana, in connexion with the amphitheatre he raises, and upon which all the skill of the time is expended in works of painting and sculpture. Chaucer describes these temples; and so by the most natural means we obtain a series of pictures that can be described by no other word that shall at once convey a sense of the feeling, and of the imaginative power that pervades them, than supernatural.

And now, while the story hurries along with rapidity in Chaucer, in Boccaccio it seems as though it never would end. One whole book is devoted to the account of the battle, instead of the few but marvellous lines of the English poet, so descriptive of the confusion and tumult of the affray, and where you in vain strive to follow any one set of actors or incidents—others so continually cross the view and draw away the attention :—

He through the thickest of the throng 'gan thrust ;—
There stumble steedès strong, and down gó'th all ;—
He rolleth under foot as doth a ball ;—

[1] Groves.

He feyneth on his foot with a truncheön—
And him hurtèleth with his foe adown, etc.

One book, again, of the Teseide is occupied with the accident to Arcite, and his marriage on the bed of death with Emily; another with the funeral of the persons killed in the combat, and the death of Arcite after expressing his generous desires for the union of Palamon and Emily; and yet a third with Arcite's funeral and its adjuncts; and as though there really was an invincible objection on the part of the author to end before he was compelled by utter lack of matter, Palamon and Emily actually make formal speeches in the last book, in order to *decline* the match, which gives opportunity to other speeches to induce them to consent, as at last they do. Compare all this with the few but delightful touches of Chaucer; as when Theseus turns to Palamon after declaring his purpose,

"I trow there needeth little sermoning
To maken you assenten to this thing," etc.

From these notices of the two works, it will be seen that the difference in length between the two poems is no proof that Chaucer did not take Boccaccio for his original. The 12,000 verses of the one *must* be narrowed by the process we have described into some such number as the 2000 of the other. So much for Boccaccio and Chaucer. Let us now see how it is with Chaucer and Dryden.

There can be no doubt that a large—perhaps the chief—portion of Dryden's popularity has been founded upon his tales from Chaucer, and especially upon his version of the Knight's Tale. Neither can there be any doubt that the tale itself is chiefly known to English readers through him. It will now be our duty to endeavour to show how undeserved that portion of his popularity has been, how inadequate for the reader, and how injurious to the original author is his version. We shall do this in a very simple and, as we conceive, impartial manner, by placing in immediate connection with each other those parallel passages, most of which would, in all probability, be selected by the respective admirers of the two poets as their best. We have merely to premise that Dryden follows Chaucer with such an evident determination neither to omit nor to alter a single feature or incident of the story, he so tracks his every thought, he so constantly even echoes his words where convenient, line for line, that when he *does* alter, we must conclude that the antiquated diction impelled him, or that he seeks to improve: a noble ambition, but difficult to accomplish under the circumstances. When Dryden took up the Knight's

Tale for *translation*, he forgot, if indeed he had ever properly known, *Chaucer*.

We commence with that most charming of descriptions and pictures, the May-morning, and Emily playing in the garden. Thus writes

CHAUCER—

Thus passeth year by year, and day by day,
Till it fell onès in a morrow of May,
That Emily, that fairer was to seen
Than is the lily on her stalkè green,
And fresher than the May with flow'rès new,
For with the rosè-colour strove her hue
(I n'ot[1] which was the finer of them two),
Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and all ready dight,[2]
For May will have no sluggardy a-night;
The season pricketh every gentle heart,
And maketh him out of his sleepè start,
And saith, Arise! and do thine observance.

Now it is one of the most unfathomable of problems to us, how—the above existing—the following could have come into existence in connection with the honoured name of

DRYDEN—

Thus year by year they pass, and day by day,
Till once ('twas on the morn of cheerful May)
The young Emilia, fairer to be seen,
Than the fair lily on the flowery green,
More fresh than May herself in blossoms new,
(For with the rosy colour strove her hue),
Walk'd, as her custom was, before the day
To do th' observance due to sprightly May:
For sprightly May commands our youth to keep
The vigils of her night, and breaks their sluggard sleep;
Each gentle breast with kindly warmth she moves;
Inspires new flames, revives extinguish'd loves."

Sprightly May indeed—and a sprightly poet; but alas! for Chaucer—all his exquisite simplicity gone! Nor does the mischief end there. We remember once hearing an air by Rossini, in which a peculiar and very lovely melody came again and again, but ever so charmingly, and with such a new sense of freshness, that it seemed to us as though some happy spirit had got hold of it and could not let it go again, but from time to time *must* burst out with new animation just when you

[1] Ne wot, do not know. [2] Dressed.

most expected he would cease. Some such feeling seems to us to pervade the lines

> And fresher than the May with flow'rès *new*,
> For with the rosè-colour strove her *hue*
> (*I n'ot which was the finer of them two*),
> Ere it was day, as she was wont to *do*, etc.

Well, perhaps it may be presumptuous to quarrel with Dryden for not perceiving and retaining what seems to us the melody of these lines; but what can be said for the omission of one of the lines themselves, nay the most charming of the whole—the line we have marked in italics? He had not a word to alter had he desired to include it. Nay, some patriotic printer to-morrow might insert it in a new edition of his works. Rhyme and reason are both ready.

We hardly like to say it—but our readers can judge for themselves as to the truth of the statement—that if there be one passage more than ordinarily beautiful among the countless beautiful passages of Chaucer, then is Dryden sure to be more than ordinarily careful to show his want of appreciation of it by his destructive alterations. Thus is it with the exquisite lines by

CHAUCER—

> The busy lark, the messenger of day,
> Saluteth with her song the morrow gray,
> And fiery Phœbus riseth up so bright,
> That all the Orient laugheth of the sight,
> And with his streamès drieth in the greves,
> The silver droppès hanging on the leaves.

Can anything be conceived more *freshly* beautiful, in *words* as well as in thought, feeling, and poetry? Here at least the *translator* needed not to alter a letter even for his own purpose. Yet we have from

DRYDEN—

> The morning lark, the messenger of day,
> Saluted in her song the morning gray;
> And soon the sun arose with beams so bright,
> That all th' horizon laugh'd to see the joyous sight;
> He with his tepid rays the rose renews,
> And licks the dropping leaves, and dries the dews.

Here is addition, it must be owned. We have not only gained the "morning lark," but the "morning gray," etc., and what have we lost? Oh, merely the expression so delightful to old-fashioned poetical ears, the "morrow gray" and the image of the "*busy* lark," now darting hither and thither, now with its

wings beating upon the air, ascending into the blue depth above till she seems but a dark speck, and at last disappears, and you think she is quite gone; but no, the sunshine flashes upon her breast, and you are again following with renewed interest the movements of the "busy lark." One line of the description in question seems to have so puzzled Dryden, that he was obliged to parallel the feat of cutting the Gordian knot by lengthening the Homeric line. We read in Chaucer—

And all the Orient laugheth of the sight.

In order fully to appreciate this glorious line, at once so musically expressive and so steeped in poetic loveliness, and which belongs to a class that even in works of the highest character occur but comparatively seldom—one should repeat it aloud, and feel how it makes the spirit as well as the voice climb; until as we reach that most charming of words—Orient—we seem to look down over a whole happy universe; and to laugh from very sympathy with it, as we descend again with the concluding portion of the line. Now let us also read aloud the *improved* line, taking, however, like leapers, a good run at starting to make us sure of getting safely over:

That all th' horizon laugh'd to see the joyous sight.

Thus were "translated" Chaucer's descriptions of external nature.

Let us now go to higher matter—to the heart of man—and the tempestuous passions that sometimes toss it about—shoreless and anchorless, as when Arcite finds himself only released from his bodily captivity in Athens to feel more heavily the spiritual bondage in which love keeps him at Thebes—so far away from his mistress. The contrast should be hardly a fair one to the elder poet—as he was not professedly a tragic dramatist like Dryden—and might therefore be supposed to have less studied the use of the tragic dramatist's mightiest weapon—pathos.

CHAUCER'S *Description of the Despairing Lover.*

So much sorrów had never creäture
That is, or shall be, while the world will 'dure;
His sleep, his meat, his drink is him beraft,[1]
That lean he wax'd, and dry as any shaft;
His eyen hollow, and grisly to behold;
His huë fallow, and pale as ashes cold.
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his moan;
And if he hearde song or instrument
Then would he weep, he mightè not be stent.[2]

[1] Bereft. [2] Stopped.

So feeble were his spirits and so low,
And changèd so, that no man couldè know
His speechè, nor his voice, though men it heard.

Does the reader remember in the whole range of poetry a more pathetic description than this? There should be one—Dryden's, who undertook to re-write it. Here is the result. Chaucer began humbly, as with a kind of awe of the emotions he contemplated and was about to describe, and as one who saw good artistical reasons for so doing; but Dryden!—he is in the very thick of the turmoil at once.

DRYDEN'S *Description of the Despairing Lover.*

He raved with all the madness of despair,
He roar'd, he beat his breast, he tore his hair;

here the poet takes a little breath, and thinks he has begun in a somewhat high key, so continues,

Dry sorrow in his stupid eyes appears,—

and now he really must drop into a more comfortable and chatty vein, so he adds,—

For wanting nourishment, he wanted tears.
His eye-balls in their hollow sockets sink;
Bereft of sleep, he loathes his meat and drink;
He withers at his heart, and looks as wan
As the pale spectre of a murdered man:
That pale turns yellow, and his face receives
The faded hue of sapless boxen leaves.
In solitary groves he makes his moan,
Walks early out, and ever is alone:
Nor, mix'd in mirth, in youthful pleasure shares,
But sighs when songs and instruments he hears:
His spirits are so low, his voice is drown'd,
He hears as from afar, or in a swound,
Like the deaf murmurs of a distant sound.

Now there is undoubtedly original power and beauty in the last three lines, though we think they are no improvement on the less ornate but more suggestive lines of Chaucer; but as to all the rest of the description, how could Dryden rest peacefully in his bed after writing it? How could he compare this line,

And wailing all the night, making his moan,

with this—

In solitary groves he makes his moan,

and yet go on to prepare hosts of similar examples for future volumes of Curiosities of Literature?

One more illustration, and we have done. Since neither in describing external nature, nor human emotions, Dryden does naught but injure—and, it must be said, vulgarise his original—does he really improve upon him as he takes the very highest poetic flights, and leaves the every-day for the supernatural world! Alas! It is precisely through his deficiency of the subtler qualities of the art and faculty divine that he fails in the cases we have examined, and the failure therefore becomes the more conspicuous as we ascend to those which are of "imagination all compact." Such is that most wonderful of poetical descriptions—

CHAUCER'S *Temple of Mars*.

First on the wall was painted a forést,
In which there dwellèd neither man nor beast,
With knotty, gnarly, barren, treës old,
Of stubbès sharp, and hideous to behold;
In which there ran a rumble and a swough
As 'twere a storm should bursten every bough.
And downward on a hill under a bent,[1]
There stood the temple of Mars armipotent,
Wrought all of burnish'd steel, of which th' entrý
Was long and strait, and ghastly for to see;
And thereout came a rage, and such a prise[2]
That it made all the gatès for to rise;
The northern light in at the doorè shone,
For window on the wall ne was there none
Through which men mighten any light discern, etc.

And thus for above seventy lines does the poet continue, adding image to image, each of them of the grandest description—but yet all so subordinated by the *unearthly feeling* that pervades them, that you cannot *dwell* upon them as they deserve, and as you would did they occur in the works of a lesser poet—but on—on they hurry you as though you sailed by night down some strange and majestic river, where stream after stream—visible only by the weird light that shines on their gloomy and terrible surface—pours in and swells the mighty tide that bears you irresistibly along—whither you know not—nor does the mighty magician who has raised all this supernatural world around give you time, or leave you the desire to inquire; breathless, you resign yourself to his will and bidding. But Dryden comes—and the whole is changed. Plain as poet can speak, he says, "See what a description of the supernatural I'll give you!" and you do see as the result of his effort a very powerful poetical passage—and *John Dryden—the poet—making it* into the bargain.

[1] Bend or slope. [2] Roar.

DRYDEN'S *Temple of Mars*.

The landscape was a forest wide and bare;
Where neither beast nor human kind repair;
The fowl that scent afar the borders fly,
And shun the bitter blast, and wheel about the sky.
A cake of scurf lies baking on the ground,
And prickly stubs, instead of trees, are found;
Or woods with knots and gnars deform'd and old,
Headless the most, and hideous to behold:
A rattling tempest through the branches went,
That stripped 'em bare, and one sole way they bent.
Heav'n froze above severe, the clouds congeal,
And through the crystal vault appeared the standing hail.
Such was the face without: a mountain stood
Threat'ning from high, and overlook'd the wood.
Beneath the low'ring brow, and on a bent,
The temple stood of Mars armipotent;
The frame of burnish'd steel, that cast a glare
From far, and seem'd to thaw the freezing air.
A strait, long entry to the temple led,
Blind with high walls, and horror over head;
Thence issued such a blast, and hollow roar,
As threatened from the hinge to heave the door;
In, through that door, a northern light there shone;
'T was all he had, for windows there were none.

It were an endless and a most unthankful task to point out how even in the details, or individual thoughts of this description, Dryden found himself unable to re-produce without injury what he had before him. One line alone is enough to decide the whole character of the relation of the two poets, looked at even as regards their business skill. Mark how in the following line every word seems like some new and additional feature made visible by so many lightning glimpses—

With knotty—gnarly—barren—treës—old;

why, the most finished lines of Pope, in which sense and sound echo each other, are toys as compared with this. Yet Dryden has not a trace of it. He is content with—

Woods with knots and gnars deform'd and old.

Of the remainder of the respective poems, let two or three examples suffice:—

CHAUCER'S

Smiler with the knife under the cloak,

becomes in

DRYDEN—

Next stood hypocrisy with holy leer,
Soft smiling, and demurely looking down,
But hid the dagger underneath the gown.

Palamon's appeal to Venus, when he tells her he has no language to tell the torment he is in, and then adds with the most moving pathos and simplicity

(CHAUCER.)

I am so *cónfuse*, that I cannot say,

becomes in

DRYDEN—

——I feel too much to pray.

Lastly, one of the most magnificent images that ever poet expressed in words—that where Arcite thus addresses Mars,—who

CHAUCER—

hast in every regne, and every land,
Of armès *all the bridle in thine hand*,"

is thus translated by

DRYDEN—

——everywhere thy power is known ;
The fortune of the fight is all thy own.

We have yet two more of these parallel passages to give ; and a very amusing contrast they furnish. It was written by

CHAUCER—

Men may the old out-run, but not out-rede ;

that is, not outstrip them in counsel and wisdom. But we find in

DRYDEN—

For this advantage Age from youth has won,
As not to be *out-ridden*—though out-run.

So that old gentlemen, it appears, should take to horseback in order to rival their sons and grandsons, when they can no longer compete with them on foot.

We may observe, in conclusion, that part (at least) of the Knight's Tale was written—probably in stanzas : see the *Anelida and Arcite*—before the 'Canterbury Tales' generally, and, it should seem, had not been appreciated as it deserved. In

Chaucer's notice of his own works in the Legend of Good Women, he mentions this tale under the title of 'Al the Love of Palamon and Arcite of Thebes,' and it is added that "the story is known little." Not the less, however, did the poet place it *first* among the 'Canterbury Tales'; and posterity has more than justified the appeal thus made to it.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

HATEFUL harm, condition of povért,"[1]
With thirst with cold, with hunger, so confounded,
To asken help, it shameth in thine heart:
If thou none ask, so sore art thou ywounded,
That very need unwrappeth all thy wounds hid.
Maugre[2] thine head, thou must, for indigence,
Or steal, or beg, or borrow thy dispense[3]

Thou blamest Christ, and sayest bitterly, he divideth unequally temporal riches. Thou blamest sinfully thy neighbour saying thou hast little, and he all. By my faith, sayest thou, sometime he shall reckon for this when he shall be burning in the everlasting fire;

For he nought helpeth need-ful in his need.

Harken what is the saying of the wise—It is better to die than to have indigence; thy very neighbours will despise thee;

If thou be poor, farewell thy reverence.

Take, also, this saying of the wise man—All the days of the poor are full of evil and suffering. Beware, therefore, lest thou come to that point.

If thou be poor, thy brother hateth thee,
And all thy friendès flee from thee, alas!
O richè merchants! full of weal be ye,
O noble, prudent folk! as in this case,
Your baggès be not filled with ambes-ace,
But with size-cinque;[4] that runneth on your chance;
At Christenmass well merry may ye dance.

Ye seeken land and sea for your winnings;
As wisè folk ye knowen all th' estate
Of regnès[5] ye be fathers of tidings,

[1] Poverty. [2] In spite of. [3] Expense, or expenditure.
[4] That is to say, not with a pair of aces, so valueless in the game of dice, but with sixes and fives, the highest numbers that can be thrown. [5] Realms.

Of talès both of peace and of debate.
I were right now of talès desolate,
N'ere[1] that a merchant, gone since many a year
Me taught a Tale which ye shall after hear.

In Syria there once dwelt a company of merchants, rich, grave, and honest men, who sent far and wide their spices, cloths of gold, and satins rich of hue. Their merchandize was so cheap and novel, that every one values highly the dealing with them, and to sell to them their wares. Now it befell that the masters of the company, whether for business or enjoyment, would go to Rome; no other messenger would they send thither, but go themselves. And in such a place as they thought advantageous for their purposes they took up their lodging. These merchants have sojourned in the town a certain time, according to their pleasure, and it so befell that the excellent renown of the Emperor's daughter, Dame Constance, was reported with every circumstance to the Syrian merchants, daily, in such manner as I shall describe to you :—

This was the common voice of every man :
Our Emperor of Romè, God him see,
A daughter hath, that since the world began,
—To reckon as well her goodness as beauty—
N' as never such another as was she ;
I pray to God her saven and sustene,[2]
And would she were of all Europe the Queen.

In her is high beauty withouten pride,
Youthè withouten green-head[3] or folly :
To all her workès virtue is her guide ;
Humbless hath slayèn in her, tyranny ;
She is mirrour of allè courtesy ;
Her heart is very chamber of holiness ;
Her hand minister of freedom and almèss.[4]

And all this voice was sooth, as God is true.

But now let us turn again to our purpose. When these merchants have newly freighted their ships, and when they have seen this blissful maiden, they went gladly home to Syria,

[1] Were it not. [2] Sustain.

[3] The history of words presents many very curious features; and no word more so than that which forms the subject of this comment. What can be more forcibly expressive or beautiful than this likening of the inexperienced, unripe mind of youth to the *green*, tender, immature growths of vegetation? but, alas! "to what base uses we may return, Horatio?"—the word, like many others of equally distinguished origin, is now unknown beyond the regions of vulgar slang.

[4] Alms, charity.

and transacted their business, and lived in prosperity, as of old. It so happened that the merchants stood in favour with the Sultan of Syria; for when they came from any strange place he would of his benignity and courtesy hospitably entertain them, and busily examine their tidings of sundry kingdoms, in order to learn the wonders that they might have heard or seen. Among other things, they told him especially of Dame Constance such great nobleness, in such an earnest and serious manner, that this Sultan hath caught so great a pleasure in having her image in his continual remembrance,

> That all his lust[1] and all his busy cure[2]
> Was for to love her whiles his life may 'dure.

Haply in that large book which men call the heaven, it was written with stars when he was born,

> That he for love should have his death, alas!
> For in the starrès, clearer than is glass,
> Is written, God wot, whoso could it read,
> The death of every man withouten drede.[3]
>
> In starrès many a winter there before
> Was writ the death of Hector, A'chilles,
> Of Pompey, Julius, ere they were ybore;
> The Strife of Thebès; and of Hercules,
> Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
> The death; but mennès wittès be so dull
> That no wight can well read it at the full.

This Sultan sent for his privy council, and, shortly to pass over this matter, declared to them his intent. He said to them that certainly unless he might have the grace to have Constance within a little time he was but as one dead; and he charged them, as their sovereign, to shape out for his life some remedy:—

> Diversè men diversè thingès saiden;
> They argumentès casten up and down;
> Many a subtle reason forth they laiden;
> They speaken of magic and abusïon;

But, finally, they see no advantage in such discourse, nor in any other way except marriage. Then they saw therein such difficulty, to speak reasonably and plain, because there was such diversity between the laws of the two countries, that they said they believed no Christian prince would be willing to

> "Wedden his child under our lawè sweet,
> That us was taught by Mahound our prophéte."

[1] Desire. [2] Care. [3] Doubt.

And he answered—

"Rather than I lose
Constance, I will be christened doubtèless.
I must be hers, I may none other choose;
I pray you hold your arguments in peace;
Saveth my life, and be not reckèless.
Go, getten her that hath my life in cure,
For in this woe I may no longer 'dure."

What needeth it to dilate more? I say, by embassy and treaty, and by the mediation of the Pope, and all the church, and all the chivalry, to the increase of Christ's dear law, and the destruction of Mahometanism—the parties are presently agreed:—How that the Sultan and his baronage, and his subjects should be christened, and he shall have Constance in marriage, and certain gold, of what quantity I know not, and give sufficient sureties. The same agreement is sworn to by each party.

Now, fair Constánce, Almighty God thee guide!

Some men, I guess, would expect that I should tell all the provision made by the Emperor, in his nobleness, for his daughter Dame Constance; but they may know well that such great ordinances as were arranged in so high a matter, can be told by no man in so little a clause. Bishops are ready to accompany her; also lords, ladies, and knights of renown, and plenty of other people. And it was notified throughout the city, that every one with great devotion should pray to Christ that he would receive this marriage with favour, and speed this voyage.

The day is come for their departure—I say the woeful, fatal day is come—and there may be no longer tarrying. One and all address themselves to go forwards. Constance, overcome with sorrow, full pale, arose, and addresses herself to go—for well she sees there is no other end. Alas! what wonder that she wept, to be sent from friends who so tenderly preserved her, to a strange nation; and be bound under subjection to one whose character she knoweth not. Husbands be all good, and ever have been; that wives know; I dare say no more.

"Father," she said, "thy wretched child Constánce,
Thy youngè daughter, fostered up so soft,
And ye, my mother, my sovereign pleasánce
Over all thing,—

Christ alone excepted—Constance, your child, recommendeth herself often unto your grace, for I shall go to Syria, and my eyes shall never see you more.

Alas! unto the Barbare natïon
I must anon, sithence[1] it is your will;
But Christ that starv'd[2] for our redemptïon,
So give me grace his hestès[3] to fulfil.

As for me, wretched woman, it is no matter though I die—

Women be born to thraldom and penánce,
And to be under mannès governance."

I trow that neither at Troy, when Pyrrhus broke the wall, or burnt Ilion—nor at the city of Thebes, when that was burnt—nor at Rome, when Hannibal thrice vanquished the Romans, and did them so much harm, was there heard such tender weeping for pity as there was in the chamber of Constance at her parting;

But forth she must, whether she weep or sing.

O first moving cruel firmament, with thy diurnal sway that crowdest ever, and hurtlest from East to West, all the bodies that naturally would hold another direction—thy crowding set the heaven in such array at the beginning of this fierce voyage, that cruel Mars hath ruined the marriage. Unfortunate ascendant tortous!—the lord, alas! falls helpless out of his angle into the darkest of the houses. O Mars! O Atyzar! O feeble Moon, unhappy is thy state! thou knittest thyself there where thou art not received; thou wert well from thence where thou art turned away. Imprudent Emperor of Rome!—alas! was there no philosopher in all thy town? Is there no one time better than another in such cases? In voyages is there no election, and especially for persons of high condition, not even when a time[4] may be known from a birth? Alas! we are still too ignorant or too slow.

To ship is brought this woful fairè maid
Solemnèly, with every circumstance:
Now Jesu Christ so be with you," she said.
There n' is no more, but "Farewell, fair Constance."
She paineth her to make good countenance;

and thus I leave her to sail forth.

[1] Since. [2] Perished. [3] Commands.

[4] A root [Chaucer's word] or radix in astrology, is, says Tyrrwhitt, "any certain time taken at pleasure, from which, as an era, the celestial motions are to be computed." But in the text root is applied to a time not taken at pleasure, but from calculations founded on the period of birth, and as the end rather than the beginning of the astrologer's labours. The root or time here mentioned appears to imply the period when Constance should have started on her voyage; and for neglecting to discover which the grave and sententious Man of Law blames her father.

The mother of the Sultan, a well of vices, having perceived her son's whole intent, and that he will leave his old sacrifices, immediately sends for her council; and when they are come to know what she meant, and are assembled in company, she seated herself, and said—"Ye know, lords, every one of you, how that my son is about to leave the holy laws of our Alkoran, given by God's messenger, Mahomet. But one vow to great God I promise, the life shall rather start out of my body than Mahomet's law out of mine heart! What should betide us from this new law but thraldom to our bodies, and penance and hell afterwards, for having renounced our belief in Mahomet? But, lords, will ye all bind yourselves, that as I shall say and advise, ye will assent, and I will make us safe for evermore?" They swore, and every man consented to stand by her side, to live and die with her; and that each in the best manner he could, to strengthen her, should try to secure his friends. So she takes the enterprise in hand. She then says to them all—"We shall first feign to take Christianity. The cold water [of baptism] shall grieve us but little. And I shall make such a feast and revel, that, as I trow, I shall requite the Sultan:

> For though his wife be christen'd never so white,[1]
> She shall have need to wash away the red,
> Though she a font of water with her led."

O Sultaness, root of iniquity! Thou Virago! Thou second Semiramis! O serpent under woman's form, like to the serpent deep bound in hell!

> O feignèd woman, all that may confound
> Virtue and innocence, through thy malíce
> Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice.

O envious Satan! since that day thou wert chased from our heritage,

> Well knewest thou to woman the olde way.

Thou madest Eve bring us into servitude—thou now wilt undo this Christian marriage. When thou wouldest beguile—alas! alas! the time!—thou still makest woman thine instrument.

The Sultaness, whom I thus blame and stigmatize, let her council privily go their way. Why should I longer tarry in my tale? On a certain day she rideth to the Sultan, and said to him she would renounce her faith, and take Christianity from

[1] Or made pure by the water of baptism.

the priest's hands, and that she repented she had been so long a heathen. She besought

him to do her that honóur,
That she might have the Christian folk to feast ;
"To pleasen them I will do my labóur."
The Sultan saith, "I will do at your hest."
And kneeling thankèd her of that request ;
So glad he was, he n'ist[1] not what to say :
She kissed her son, and home she goeth her way.

The Christian people reach the land in Syria, in a great and solemn company. Hastily the Sultan sends a message, first to his mother, and then to all the country round, saying that out of doubt his wife was coming, and praying them to ride towards the Queen, in order to sustain the honour of his kingdom.

Great was the press, and rich was the array
Of Syrians and Romans met in fere.[2]
The mother of the Sultan, rich and gay,
Receivèd her with all so glad a cheer
As any mother might her daughter dear ;
And to the nextè city there beside,
A softè pace solémnèly they ride.

The triumph of Julian, I trow, of which Lucan maketh such a vaunt, was not more royal nor more curious than the assemblage of this blissful host. But this scorpion, this wicked spirit, the Sultaness, for all her flattering, plotted beneath to sting full mortally.

The Sultan cometh himself soon after, so royally, that it is wondrous to tell, and welcomed her with all joy and bliss ; and thus in mirth and joy I leave them.

And now the time has arrived that the old Sultaness ordained for the feast of which I told you. And to the feast the Christian people severally address them,

both young and old.
There may men feast, and royalty behold,
And dainties more than I can you devise :
But all too dear they bought it ere they rise.

O sudden woe, that art ever successor to worldly bliss ! Sprinkled with bitterness is the end of the joys of our worldly labour ! Woe occupieth the end of our gladness ! Hearken to this counsel for thy security :

[1] Knew not. [2] Company.

Upon thy gladdè days have in thy mind
The únware woe[1] that cometh aye behind.

For shortly, to tell it in brief, the Sultan and the Christians, every one, are all cut down, and stabbed at the board, Dame Constance alone excepted. This old Sultaness, this cursed crone with her friends, hath done this cursed deed; for she would herself rule all the country. Nor was there one of the Syrians who had been converted, and that knew of the Sultan's counsel, but was also hewed down before he could escape; and with foot-hot speed they have immediately taken Constance,

And in a shippè steerless (God it wot!)
They have her set, and bade her learn to sail
Out of Surríe[2] again-ward to Itaílle."[3]

A certain treasure she had brought thither, and, truth to say, also plenty of provisions, they have given her; and she had also clothes.

And forth she saileth in the saltè sea,
O my Constance, full of benignity!
O Emperorès youngè daughter dear!
He that is Lord of Fortune be thy steer![4]

She blesseth her,[5] and with full piteous voice,
Unto the cross of Christ then saidè she:
"O clear, O wealful altar, holy cross,
Red of the Lambè's blood, full of pity,
That wash'd the world from old iniquity,
Me from the fiend, and from his clawès keep,
That day that I shall drenchen[6] in the deep.

Victorious tree! Protectïon of true!
That onèly were worthy for to bear
That King of Heaven, with his woundès new—
The whitè Lamb, that hurt was with a spear;
Flemer[7] of fiendès, out of him, and here,
On which thy limbès faithfully extend,
Me keep, and give me might my life to mend."

Yearès and dayès fleet[8] this creäture
Throughout the sea of Greece, into the Strait
Of Maroc, as it was her ádventure.
Of many a sorry mealè may she bait;
After[9] her death full often may she wait,
Ere that the wildè wavè will her drive
Unto the place there as she shall arrive.

[1] That is to say, the *woe* that steals upon us *unawares*.
[2] Syria. [3] Italy. [4] Pilot, guide. [5] Herself.
[6] Be drowned. [7] Banisher. [8] Floated. [9] Seeking or watching for.

Men might ask why she was not slain? Also who saved her at the feast? I answer to that demand, Who saved Daniel in the horrible cave, where every one but he, master or servant, was devoured by the lions before he could escape? None but God, that Daniel bare in his heart. It pleased God to show his wonderful miracles in Constance, in order that we should see his mighty works. Christ, who is to every harm the remedy, often doth things, as learned men know, by certain means for certain ends, that appear dark to man's wit. Our ignorance does not allow us to understand his prudent provisions. Now, since she was not slain at the feast, who kept her from drowning in the sea? Who kept Jonas in the maw of the fish till he was spouted up at Nineveh? Well may men know it was only He who kept the Hebrew people from drowning when, with dry feet, they passed through the sea.

Who badè fourè spirits of Tempést,
(That power have to 'noyen land and sea,
Both north and south, and also west and east,)
Annoyen neither landè, sea, nor tree?
Soothly the Cómmander of that was He
That from the tempest aye this woman kept,
As well when she awoke as when she slept.

Where might this woman meat and drinkè have?
Three years and more, how lasteth her victaílle?
Who fed the Egyptian Mary in the cave,
Or in desért?—No wight but Christ, *sans faille*.
Five thousand folkè! it was great marvaílle,
With loavès five and fishes two to feed:
God sent his foison[1] at her greatè need.

She driveth forth into our ocean, and throughout our wide sea, until at last under a fort, the name of which I know not, far in Northumberland, the waves cast her, and the ship stuck so fast in the sand that it would not move throughout the next tide. It was the will of Christ that she should stay. The constable of the castle goes down to see the wreck, and, in searching through the ship

He found this weary woman, full of care.

And he found also the treasure that she brought. She besought him, in her language, in mercy to kill her, and deliver her out of the sorrow she was in. Her speech was a kind of corrupt Latin, but she was always understood by it. When the constable was satisfied with his search, he brought this woeful woman to land. She kneeleth down, and thanketh God's

[1] Abundance.

munificence; but what she was she would tell no one, neither for foul nor fair, even though she should die for her silence.

She was, she said, so mazèd in the sea,
That she forgot her mindè, by her truth.
The constable had of her so great pity,
And eke his wife, they weepèden for ruth.
She was so diligent, withouten slouth,[1]
To serve and pleasen every in that place,
That all her love that looken on her face.

The constable and Dame Hermegild, his wife, were pagans, as were the people of that country generally.

But Hermegild lov'd Constance as her life;
And Constance hath so long sojoúrnèd there,
In orison, with many a bitter tear,
Till Jesu hath converted, through his grace,
Dame Hermegild, constábless of that place.

In all that land no Christians durst assemble. All Christian people have fled from the country, through fear of the pagans, that

conquer'd all about
The places of the North by land and sea.
To Walès fled the Christianity[2]
Of oldè Britons, dwelling in this isle.
There was their refuge for the meanè while.

But yet the Christian Britons were not so completely exiled but that there were some who privately honoured Christ, and beguiled heathen people [from their errors]; and near the castle there dwelled three such.

That one of them was blind, and might not see,
But if it were with th' eyen of his mind,
With which men see aftér that they be blind.

Bright was the sun as in that summer's day,
For which the constable and his wife alsó,
And Constance, haddè take the rightè way
Toward the sea, a furlong way or two,
To playen, and to roamen to and fro;
And, in that walk this blindè man they met,
Crooked and old, with eyèn fast yshet.[3]

"In name of Christ," crièd this old Britón,
"Dame Hermegild, give me my sight again!"
This lady wax'd afraièd of that soun,

[1] Sloth. [2] Christian folk. [3] Shut.

Lest that her husband, shortly for to sain,
Would her for Jesu Christè's love have slain,
Till Constance made her bold, and bade her worche[1]
The will of Christ, as daughter of holy church.

The constable wax'd abashèd[2] of that sight,
And saidè, "What amounteth all this fare[3]?"
Constance answér'd, "Sir, it is Christè's might
That helpeth folk out of the fiendès snare."
And so far-forth she 'gan her law[4] declare,
That she the constable, ere that it was eve,
Converted, and on Christ made him believe.

The constable was not lord of the fort where he found Constance, but kept it strongly many a winter's space, under Alla, king of Northumberland; who was full wise and bold, and able of his hand against the Scots, as men may well hear.

Satan, that ever waiteth to beguile us, saw all the perfection of Constance, and began to consider how he might requite her; and he made a young knight that dwelt in the town love her so ardently, with an impure affection, that he verily thought he should die unless he could induce her to listen to him.

He wooeth her, but it availeth nought;
She wouldè do no sinnè by no way;
And for despite, he compassed in his thought
To maken her a shameful death to dey.[5]
He waiteth when the constable was away,
And privily upon a night he crept
In Hermegildès chamber while she slept.

Weary, for-wakèd[6] in her orison,
Sleepeth Constánce, and Hermegild also.
This knight, through Sathanas' temptatïon,
All softèly is to the bed ygo,
And cut the throat of Hermegild a-two,
And laid the bloody knife by Dame Constánce,
And went his way—there God give him mischance!

Soon after, the constable cometh home again with Alla, the king of that country, and saw his wife ruthlessly slain, for which he often wept, and wrung his hands; and in the bed by Dame Constance, he found the bloody knife.

Alas! what might she say?
For very woe her wit was all away.

King Alla was told the circumstances of this misfortune, and of the time, and where, and in what manner Constance was found

[1] Work. [2] Astonished, or ashamed. [3] Behaviour.
[4] Her Christian faith. [5] Die.
[6] For, or through her wakefulness in her orisons.

in the ship, as ye have before heard me describe. Pity began to arise in the king's heart, when he saw so benign a creature fallen into such an unhappy condition.

For as the lamb to-ward his death is brought,
So stands this innocent before the king.
This falsè knight, that hath this treason wrought,
Bear'th her in hand that she hath done this thing.
But nevertheless there was great murmuring
Among the people, and say[1] they cannot guess
That she had done so great a wickedness;

For they have seen her ever so virtuous,
And loving Hermegild right as her life.
Of this bare witness every in that house,
Save he that Hermegild slew with his knife.

The gentle king hath caught a great motive on the part of this witness, and he thought he would inquire deeper into the case in order to learn the truth. Alas! Constance, thou hast no champion, nor canst thou thyself fight. So woe the day! unless He that died for our redemption, and that bound Satan even there where he yet lies, be now thy strong champion; for unless Christ make known upon thee some miracle, without guilt shalt thou be slain as guilty. She set herself down on her knees, and said, "Immortal God, that savedest Susanna from false blame, and thou merciful maid, Mary, I mean daughter to Saint Anne, before whose child angels sing Hosannah! if I be guiltless of this felony, succour me, or else I shall die."

Have ye not seen some time a palè face
(Among a press[2]) of him that hath been lad[3]
Toward his death,[4] where him gainéth no grace,
And such a colour in his face hath had,
Men mighten know him that was so bestad[5]
Amongè all the faces in that rout:[6]
So stands Constance, and looketh her about.

O queens living in prosperity, duchesses, and ye ladies every one, have some pity on her adversity. An emperor's daughter stands alone. She hath no wight to whom she may make her complaint. O blood royal,

that standeth in this dread,
Far be thy friendès at thy greatè need.

This King Alla hath such compassion—as gentle hearts are full of pity—that the water ran down from his eyes. "Now hastily

[1] And they say. [2] Crowd. [3] Led. [4] A touch from Chaucer's own observation. [5] Beset. [6] Company.

fetch hither a book," quoth he; "and if this knight will swear that Constance slew this woman, we will then consider who shall be our justice [to try her]." A British book, in which was written the Evangelists, was fetched, and on this book he swore anon she was guilty; and in the meantime a hand smote him upon the bone of the neck,

That down he fell anon right as a stone,
And both his eyen burst out of his face,
In sight of every body in that place.

A voice was heard, in general audïence,
That said, "Thou hast de-slander'd, guiltèless,
The daughter of holy church in her presénce:
Thus hast thou done, and yet hold I my peace."
Of this marvél aghast was all the press;
As mazèd folk they stooden every one,
For dread of wreakè,[1] save Constánce alone.

Great was the dread, and also the repentance, of them that had wrongly suspected the simple and innocent Constance; and, in conclusion, for this miracle, and through Constance's mediation, the king and many others then present were converted: Christ's grace be thanked! The false knight was slain hastily, by the sentence of Alla, for his untruth; and yet Constance had great pity for his death. And afterward, Jesus, of his mercy, made Alla wed with great solemnity,

This holy maidè, that is bright and sheen;
And thus hath Christ ymade Constánce a queen.

But who was in great woe (if I shall not lie) on account of this marriage, but Donegild (and she only), the king's mother, [a woman] full of tyranny? She thought her cursed heart would burst asunder; she would not have had her son do this thing; she was full of anger and malice that he should have taken so strange a creature to be his mate.

Me list not of the chaff, nor of the straw,
Maken so long a tale, as of the corn.

Why should I tell of the royalty of this marriage? Or which course goes first [at the feast]? Who bloweth in a trumpet or in a horn?

The fruit of every tale is for to say
They eat, and drink, and dance, and sing, and play.

. . . . . .

Some time after the king goes to Scotland to seek his foes

[1] Vengeance.

and Constance is intrusted to the care of a bishop and of the constable; and while he is absent a male child is born, and is christened Maurice at the font. The constable orders forth a messenger: and he wrote unto the king the blissful tidings of what had befallen, and other tidings necessary to be speedily known. The messenger hath the letter, and forth he goes on his way. This messenger, thinking to benefit himself, rides immediately to the king's mother, and saluteth her in fair language:—

"Madame," quoth he, "ye may be glad and blithe,
And thanken God a hundred thousand sithe;[1]
My lady queen hath child, withouten doubt,
To joy and bliss of all the realm about.

Lo, here the letters sealèd of this thing,
That I must bear with all the haste I may.
If ye will ought[2] unto your son the king,
I am your servant bothè night and day."
Donegild answered "As now this timè—Nay,
But here all night I will thou take thy rest,
To-morrow will I say thee what me lest."[3]

This messenger drank sadly[4] ale and wine;
And stolen were his letters privily
Out of his box, while he slept as a swine.
And counterfeited they were subtlely;
Another she him wrought full sinfully,
Unto the king, direct of this mattére
From his constáble, as ye shall after hear.

The letter spake,—The queen delivered was
Of so horrible and fiend-like creäture,
That in the castle none so hardy was,
That any whilè durst therein endure.
The mother was an elf by ádventure
Become, by charmès or by sorcery;
And every man hatéth her company.

Woe was this king when he this letter had seen,
But to no wight he told his sorrows sore,
But of his owen hand he wrote again;
"Welcome the sonde[5] of Christ for evermore
To me, that am now learnèd in this lore!
Lord, welcome be thy lust[6] and thy pleasánce;
My lust I put all in thine ordinánce.

Keepeth this child, all be it foul or fair,
And eke my wife, unto mine home coming:

[1] Times. [2] Will send anything. [3] Me lest—pleases me.
[4] Steadily, pertinaciously. [5] Gift. [6] Desire.

Christ when he list may senden me an heir
More ágreable than this to my likíng."
This letter he sealeth, privily weepíng,

which was soon taken to the messenger, and he goes forth.

O Messenger, full of drunkenness! Strong is thy breath, thy limbs are ever faltering, and thou betrayest all secrets. Thy mind is lost; thou janglest as a jay; thy face is changed. Where drunkenness prevaileth in any company, there, without doubt, no counsel can be hid. O Donegild, I have no English worthy of thy malice and thy tyranny; and therefore I resign thee to the fiend: let him indite thy treason. Fie, mannish Spirit, fie!

Oh, nay, by God, I lie.
Fie, *fiendlike* Spirit, for I dare well tell,
Though thou here walk, thy spirit is in hell.

This messenger cometh from the king again, and alights at the court of the king's mother; and she was very glad, and strove to please him in all possible ways. He drank, and well filled out his girdle. He sleepeth and he snoreth in his usual manner all night, and until the sunrise. Again were every one of his letters stolen, and others counterfeited in this manner:—The king commanded his constable, that on penalty of hanging and high judgment, he should not suffer Constance under any circumstances to abide within his kingdom three days and the quarter of a tide.

But in the samè ship as he her found
Her and her youngè son and all her gear,
He shouldè put, and crowdè from the lond,[1]
And charge her that she never eft[2] come there.
O my Constance! well may thy ghost[3] have fear,
And sleeping in thy dream, be in penánce,
When Donegild cast all this ordinánce.

When the messenger awoke on the morrow he took the nearest way unto the castle, and gave the constable the letter, who, when he saw it, cried "Alas! and woe the day!

Lord Christ," quoth he, "how may this world endure,
So full of sin is many a creäture!

Oh mighty God, if that it be thy will, since thou art a rightful Judge, how may it be that innocence is suffered to perish, and wicked people to reign in prosperity. Ah, good Constance, alas! woe is me, that I must be thy tormentor or die a shameful death: there is no other way."

[1] Land. [2] Again. [3] Spirit.

Weepen both young and old in all that place
When that the king this cursèd letter sent;
And Constance, with a deadly palè face,
The fourthè day toward her ship she went;
But nevertheless she taketh in good intent,
The will of Christ, and kneeling on the strond,
She saidè, "Lord, aye welcome be thy sond."[1]

He that me keptè from the falsè blame,
While I was in the land amongès you,
He can me keep from harm and eke from shame
In the salt sea, although I see not how;
As strong as ever he was, he is right now;
In him trust I, and in his mother dear,
That is to me my sail, and eke my steer.[2]

Her little child lay weeping in her arm;
And kneeling piteously, to him she said,
"Peace, little son, I will do thee no harm;"
With that, her kerchief off her head she braid,[3]
And over his little eyen she it laid,
And in her arm she lulleth it full fast,
And unto heaven her eyen up she cast.

"Mother," quoth she, "and maiden bright, Mary, true it is that through woman's incitement mankind was lost, and condemned for ever to death, for which thy child was rent on a cross. Thy blissful eyes saw all his torment; then is there no comparison between thy woe and any woe that man may sustain. Thou sawest thy child slain before thine eyes, and yet, by my faith, my little child lives:

Now, lady bright! to whom all woful cry,
Thou glory of womanhood, thou fairè May!
Thou haven of refúge, bright star of day!
Rue on my child, that of thy gentleness
Ruest on every sinful in distress.

O little child, alas! what is thy guilt,
That never wroughtest sin as yet, pardie?
Why will thine hardè father have thee spilt?[4]
O mercy, dearè constàble," said she,
"And let my little child dwell here with thee;
And if thou dar'st not saven him for blame,
So kiss him onès in his father's name."

Therewith she looketh backward to the land
And saidè, "Farewell, husband, ruthèless!"
And up she rose, and walketh down the strand
Toward the ship; her followeth all the press;[5]

[1] Gift, or bidding. [2] Pilot, guide. [3] Took.
[4] Put to death. [5] Crowd

And ever she pray'th her child to hold his peace,
And took her leave, and with holy intent
She blesseth her,[1] and to the ship she went.

The ship was victualled for her, it is no fear, abundantly, for a long space; and of other necessaries that she might need, she had enough, praised be the grace of God. For wind and weather Almighty God provide, and bring her home:

I can no better say,
But in the sea she driveth forth her way.

Alla the king comes home soon after this
Unto his castle, of the which I told,
And asketh where his wife and his child is;
The constable 'gan about his hearte cold,
And plainly all the matter he him told
As ye have heard—I can tell it no better—
And show'd the kinges seale and his letter.

And saide, "Lord, as ye commanded me,
Up' pain of death, so have I done certain,"

The messenger was tortured until he must know and tell plainly and fully in what place from night to night he had lain;

And thus by wit and subtle enquiring
Imagin'd was by whom this 'gan to spring.

The hand was knowen that the letter wrote,
And all the venom of this cursed deed.

But in what manner certainly I know not. The effect is this, without doubt, that Alla slew his mother, that men might plainly understand she was a traitor to her allegiance: this was the unhappy end of old Donegild. The sorrow that Alla night and day maketh for his wife and child may be told by no tongue. I will now again turn to Constance, who floateth in the sea, in pain and sorrow, five years and more, as it pleased Christ's will, before her ship approached the land. At last, under a heathen castle (of which I find not the name in my text) Constance and her child are cast up by the sea. Almighty God, that saved all mankind, have some remembrance of Constance and her child, that are fallen presently into heathen hands, and are on the point of destruction.

Down from the castle there cometh many a wight to gaze on this ship and on Constance; and shortly on a night from the castle the lord's steward (God give him misfortune)—a thief that had renounced our creed, came into the ship alone, and offered violence to her.

[1] Herself.

Woe was this wretched woman then begon ;
Her childè crieth, and she piteously ;
But blissful Mary help'd her right anon,
For with her struggling well and mightily
The thief fell overboard all suddenly,
And in the sea he drownèd for vengeánce ;
And thus hath Christ unwemmed[1] kept Constance.

O, foulè lust ! O luxury, thine end !

Not only dost thou make man's mind faint, but verily thou ruinest his body. The end of thy work, as of thy blind lusts, is complaining. How many men find that, not for the sin committed, but for their intent to do this sin, they are either ruined or slain ! And how may this weak woman have the strength to defend herself against this renegade ?

O Góliath, immeasurable of length,
How mightè David maken thee so mate,[2]
So young, and of armóur so desolate,
How durst he look upon thy dreadful face ?
Well may men say it was but Goddès grace.

Who gave Judith courage or hardihood to slay Holofernes in his tent, and to deliver out of wretchedness the people of God ? I say that even as God a

spirit and vigour sent
To them, and savèd them out of mischance,[3]
So sent he might and vigour to Constance.

Forth go'th her ship throughout the narrow mouth
Of Gíbraltar and Ceuta, drivíng alwáy,
Sometimè west, and sometime north and south,
And sometime east, full many a weary day,
Till Christè's mother (blessed be she, aye !)
Hath shapen through her endless goodèness
To make an end of all her heaviness.

Now let us leave Constance for a short time, and speak we of the Roman emperor. By letters from Syria he hath learned the slaughter of the Christian people, and the dishonour done to his daughter by a false traitor—I mean the wicked cursed Sultaness, who had caused little and great to be all slain at the feast. The emperor in consequence hath sent his senator in a royal manner, and of other lords God knows many a one, to take high vengeance upon the Syrians. They burn, slay, and bring to misfortune for a long time, but in the end they address themselves to their return homeward. And as this victorious

[1] Unspotted. [2] So suddenly stricken dead. [3] Misfortune, evil.

senator repaireth to Rome, sailing full royally, he met, as the story relates, the ship driving along,

> In which Constance sitteth full piteously:
> Nothing ne knew he what she was, ne why
> She was in such array, she n'ouldè say
> Of her estate, although she shouldè dey.[1]
>
> He bringeth her to Rome; and to his wife
> He gave her, and her youngè son also;
> And with the senator led she her life.
> Thus can our lady bringen out of woe,
> Woeful Constance, and many another mo',
> And longè timè dwell'd she in that place,
> In holy works as ever was her grace.

The senator's wife was her aunt, but for all that she did not know her. I will now leave Constance under the government of the senator, and return to Alla, who for his wife weepeth and sigheth sorely; and who, on a day, fell into such repentance for having slain his mother, that he came to Rome for penance, and put himself under the Pope's directions, in all matters, high and low, and besought Jesus Christ to forgive all his wicked works. The fame is immediately carried through the town by his harbinger that King Alla should come on pilgrimage; and the senator, as was usual, rode to meet him, with many of his kindred, not only to exhibit proper reverence for the king, but also to show his own high magnificence. Great hospitality and honour did the king and the senator show to each other; and it so happened that in a day or two the senator went to feast with King Alla, and in his company went also Constance's son. Some men would say it was at the request of Constance that the senator led the child to the feast.

> I may not tellen every circumstance;
> Be as be may, there was he at the least.
> But sooth it is right at his mother's hest,[2]
> Before them all, during the meatès space,
> The child stood looking in the kingès face.
>
> This Alla king hath of this child great wonder,
> And to the senator he said anon.
> "Whose is that fairè child that standeth yonder?"
> "I n'ot,"[3] quoth he, "by God and by Saint John;
> A mother he hath, but father hath he none,
> That I of wot;"

but briefly, in a short space of time, he told Alla how the child had been found.

[1] Die. [2] Will. [3] Ne wot, know not.

"But God wot," quoth this senator alsó,
"So virtuous a liver in my life
Ne saw I never;

nor have I ever heard more of worldly woman, whether maiden wife, or widow. I dare well say she had rather a knife were driven through her breast than become a wicked woman. There is no man could bring her to that point." Now this child was as like unto Constance as it was possible for a creature to be, and Alla, having her face in memory, mused thereon, if that the child's mother could be she who had been his wife. Privily he sighed, and hurried from the table.

"Parfay," thought he, "phantóm is in my head,
I ought to deem of rightful judgèment,
That in the saltè sea my wife is dead."

And afterwards he argued with himself—"How know I but that Christ have sent hither my wife by sea, as well as he sent her to my country, from whence she departed?"

And after noon he went home with the senator to see if this wonder had happened. The senator paid him great honour.

And hastily he sent aftèr Constánce.
But trusteth well her lustè not to dance:
When that she wistè wherefore was that sond;[1]
Unnethès[2] on her feet she mightè stond.

When Alla saw his wife, fair he her gret,[3]
And wept, that it was ruthè for to see;
For at the firstè look he on her set
He knew well verily that it was she.
And for sorrów as dumb she stands as tree:
So was her heartè shut in her distress,
When she remember'd his unkindèness.

Twíes she swoonèd in his owen sight;
He wept, and him excuseth piteously:
"Now God," quoth he, "and all his hallows[4] bright,
So wissly on my soul as have mercy,
That of your harm as guiltèless am I
As is Mauríce my son, so like your face;
Ellès the fiend me fetch out of this place."

Long was the sobbing and the bitter pain
Ere that their woful heartès mighten cease,
Great was the pity for to hear them plain,
Through whichè plaintés gan their woe increase.
I pray you all my labour to release,
I may not tell their woe until to-morrow,
I am so weary for to speak of sorrow.

[1] Message. [2] Hardly. [3] Greeted. [4] Saints.

But finally, when the truth is known that Alla was guiltless of her woe—

I trow a hundred timès they been kissed,
And such a bliss is there betwixt them two,
That save the joy that lasteth ever mo',
There is none like that any creäture
Hath seen or shall, while that the world may 'dure.

Then prayed she her husband meekly, in order to relieve the long pining of her heart, that he would beg her father specially to vouchsafe of his majesty some day to dine with them; she prayed him also to say nothing to him of herself. Some men would say that the child Maurice doth this message unto the emperor, but, as I guess, Alla was not so unwise as to send a child only to him who is the sovereign of honour and the flower of all Christendom; it is better to believe he went also himself. The emperor kindly granted the request to come to dinner:—

As well rede I he lookèd busily
Upon the child, and on his daughter thought.

Alla goes to his lodging, and, as he should, arrays everything for the feast to the best of his ability. The morrow came and Alla and his wife prepared to meet the emperor, and in joy and gladness they rode forth, and when she saw her father in the street, she alighted hastily, and falleth before him.

"Father," quoth she, "your youngè child, Constance,
Is now full clean out of your rémembrance.

I am your daughter, your Constance," quoth she;
"That whilom ye have sent into Surríe;"[1]
It am I, father, that in the saltè sea,
Was put alone, and damnèd[2] for to die:
Now, goodè father, mercy I you cry;
Send me no more unto none heathenesse,
But thank my lord here of his kindèness."

Who can the piteous joyè tellen all
Betwixt them three since they been thus ymet?

But I shall make an end of my tale; the day goeth fast, I will no longer delay. These glad folk being seated at dinner, I leave them to dwell in joy and bliss a thousand times greater than I can tell of. The child Maurice was afterwards made emperor by the pope, and lived like a Christian, doing great honour to Christ's church. But I let his story pass by; my tale refers to Constance. In the old Roman gestes men may find his life. I bear it not in mind.

[1] Syria. [2] Condemned.

This King Alla, when he saw the fitting time, returns with his sweet and holy wife to England the nearest way, and there lives in joy and quiet. Although it lasted but a little while.

> Joy of this world for time will not abide;
> From day to night it changeth as the tide.

Who ever lived in such delight for a day, that he stirred neither conscience, nor ire, nor affection, nor some quarrel of kindred, nor envy, nor pride, nor passion, nor offence? I say this only for this end—that but a little while lasts the bliss of Alla and Constance,

> For Death, that taketh of high and low his rent,

took Alla out of this world when a year had passed, and Constance hath great sorrow for him. Now let us pray to God to bless his soul. Finally, Constance goeth back to Rome, all her adventures over, where she finds her friends alive and in health. And when she has found her father, she falleth on her knees to the ground, and

> Weeping for tenderness in heartè blithe,

she thanketh God a hundred thousand times. In virtue and deeds of holy charity they all live, and are never again divided until death parts them. This is the life they lead. Farewell, my tale is at an end. Now Jesus Christ, that of his might may send joy after woe, govern us in his grace, and keep us all in safety.

Professor Lounsbury, of Yale, Newhaven, U.S.A., has lately shown (*Nation*, July 4th, 1889) that the hitherto lost work of Chaucer, his translation 'of the Wrechede Engendryng of Mankynde, as man may in Pope Innocent ifinde' mentioned in the first cast of the prologue to his 'Legend of Good Women,' practically exists in the first four stanzas of the Proem to the 'Man of Law's Tale,' in stanzas 47, 97, 118, 148 of the Tale itself, and in much of the Pardoner's talk on gluttony and appetite in his Tale. All these portions of Chaucer's work are founded on, or englished from, portions of the treatise of Pope Innocent III., "De Contemptu Mundi, sive de Miseria Conditionis Humanæ."

REMARKS ON THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

OF the story of the 'Innocent Persecuted Wife' there are many versions, Arabian, Persian, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, Early English, etc. Mr. Clouston's sketch of most of them is in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues.'[1] In the same volume is the original of Chaucer's *Constance*, of Gower's version in his *Confessio Amantis*, book ii., and of the Early English romance of *Emare*, namely, an extract from Nicholas Trivet's 'French Chronicle,' with a modern englishing by the late Edmund Brock,[2] a 15th century englishing,[3] and Analogues from the *Gesta Romanorum* and Matthew Paris.[4]

The statement in the romance of *Emare* that its story

> . . . is one of Bretagne lays
> That was used by oldè days,

is not to be taken as meaning that the English writer of that romance merely translated his poem from a Breton lay, or even from a fuller French poem. Trivet's prose was evidently the main source of the English poetical versions of the Constance story.

It is possibly true that Gower wrote his *Constance* before Chaucer did his 'Man of Law's Tale,' and that the latter refers to Gower in the lines

> "Some men would say how that the child Maurice[5]
> Doth this message unto this Emperor;"

for Gower does send Maurice to the Emperor. But Trivet sends the boy there too: "Constaunce charga son fitz Morice del message." Chaucer, however, had served as valet and esquire for many years at Edward III.'s court, and it shocked his sense of the dignity of Royalty, that an unknown lad of eighteen (though really a prince), should be sent as a messenger to the Emperor of Rome, that flower of Christian folk. He therefore set the non-courtly or provincial ignorance of Trivet and Gower aside as that of "some men," and showed his own courtierly knowledge of what was fitting on such an occasion.

[1] Pp. 366-414. [2] Pp. 1-53. [3] Pp. 221-250. [4] Pp. 55-84.
[5] B, 1086.

"But as I guess, Alla was nought so nice[1]
To him that was of so sovereign honour
As he that is of Christian folk the flower,
Sent any child; but it is best to deem
He went himself; and so it may well seem."

This is one of those self-revealing little touches which faithful students of Chaucer are continually finding in him, and which hasty readers and dryasdust editors never note. That it is also characteristic of the Teller of the Tale (see below) is another instance of the perfection of Chaucer's art.

But if Chaucer had, in point of time, followed Gower in this story, and re-written what the latter had already written, we could not be too thankful for the just estimation of his predecessor's labours, that he thus practically exhibited. We have only to take up the first specimen that comes to hand of the productions of the "Moral Gower," as Chaucer called him, to see how necessary it was that such a character and story as those of Constance should be inspired by that diviner breath of poesy which the one knew so well how to give them, but of which the other was completely destitute. And we may here observe that it is not our purpose to lengthen out the Remarks appended to each of the Tales in this Series, by calling attention to particular passages of excellence, except in those cases where we have some special and important object in view, as in the 'Remarks to the Knight's Tale.' We have none such at present. Gower is not Dryden—has none of Dryden's fame; Chaucer can gain nothing by the most favourable contrasts with him. It has been observed, "his narrative is often quite petrifying;" and one can easily judge that this is no exaggeration when we know that Gower actually accomplished the feat of turning Ovid into an annalist.

There are, however, two or three features of the 'Man of Law's Tale' that demand a few passing words. The first is the very dramatic manner in which the character of the relater—the Man of Law—is preserved in the style of the narrative. It is impossible for a moment to forget the traits. Chaucer has ascribed to him,

Discreet he was, and of great reverence—
He seemèd such—his wordès were so wise.

Accordingly, nothing can be more pompous within the bounds of poetical propriety than the style of his language, or the whole tenor of his reflections, and of which the first verse strikes, as it were, the key-note—

[1] Foolish.

Oh hateful harm, condition of povért'!
With thirst, with cold, with hunger, so confounded;
To asken help it shameth in thine heart; etc.

nothing more professional than his desire to be correct, and to state both sides of the question, even in such seemingly trifling questions as,—*how* Maurice went to the Emperor alone, or in company with his father,

Some men would say, etc.,

nothing more judge-like, and altogether characteristic, than his readiness to express his condemnation of error, and his virtuous indignation against all evil doers. Has the Emperor of Rome forgotten to consult the astrologers, when he is about to send forth his daughter on her voyage, the Man of Law pauses to ask:

Imprudent Emperor of Rome, alas!
Was there no philosopher in all thy town?

Is the Sultaness about to commit all sorts of wickedness—she shall not at all events do it, even in fiction, without the Man of Law's hurling his anathemas at her head:

O Sultaness, root of iniquity,
Virago thou—Semiramis the Second, etc.

Does the messenger get drunk, the Man of Law takes care that every one who listens to the tale shall tremble for the consequences of that vice, by gazing on the picture he paints of the messenger, fulfilled of drunkenness. Does the lord's steward offer violence to the lonely and miserable Constance, we are not only informed that he is a thief that had renounced our creed, and that he was drowned, but we have also the moral carefully pointed for us—

O foulè lust of luxury, lo, thine end!

Chaucer, like Homer, must have his occasional nod, it seems. And at such a time, we presume, he overlooked the awkwardness that is felt on reading the tale, from the similarity in sex, position, character, and influence of its chief moving agents. It is the mother of the Sultan who puts all the Christians to death at Constance's marriage feast, and sends her forth to float for days and years on the sea; it is the mother of King Alla, who, during that monarch's absence, re-commits poor Constance to the element from which she had before escaped so marvellously.

And Constance—what a character is hers! We might believe she was an angel for her patience, benignity, heroism,

and faith, but that we see and feel too deeply how thoroughly she was the woman, in her retiring *sensitiveness* to the wrongs that come, or appear to come, by the hands of those she loves best, and in the tenacity and silence with which they are brooded over. We do learn somewhat of her feelings when the first wrong is done her, because she has reason to believe that no wrong is intended ; so while she obeys her parents, and will go to the barbarous nation, she allows the reflection to be wrung from her,

> Women be born to thraldom and penánce,
> And to be under mannès governance.

But when the consequences of her parents' act become fully known to her, as she waits for her death upon the wild waves, she has no longer words to speak—her lips are mute thenceforward—she can but feel the anguish at her heart. She is driven ashore upon the rocks of Northumbria, and the constable and his wife relieve her from all further fear of death ; still not even their kindness can win her to disclose the sad story. As the poet says,

> But what she was she wouldè no man say,
> For foul or fair, though that she shouldè dey.

So again with the next great and still more terrible era of her life. For the first time her heart has expanded towards a lover in the person of her husband, Alla ; the joys of the mother have been added to those of the wife :—she is in the enjoyment of the highest bliss that humanity may well know ; when suddenly she is again on the shores of the dreadful sea, lulling her child to keep it from crying, the vessel—untenanted until she enter it—rocketh before her, the waves roaring and dashing about her feet, as though eager for her destruction. And it is her *husband*, she thinks, who has commanded all this ; yet her only words are

> Farewell, husband, ruthéless,

and she enters the ship, praying the child ever to hold his peace.

Again she is redeemed from the jaws of the terrible deep, but is silent to the Senator. An ordinary observer might think all this while she felt little ; but mark, when she does again meet with Alla, how all that has been passing within her is revealed—how the woman, the tender, confiding, but as she believes cruelly trampled on woman, becomes apparent. At the first look Alla knew her ; and as to Constance,

> *she for sorrow as dumb stood as a tree ;*
> So was her heartè shut in her distress,
> When she remember'd his unkindèness.

But she soon learns her error—and then indeed it is happy, happy Constance.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

IN oldè dayès of the King Arthóur,[1]
Of which that Britons speaken great honóur,
All was this land fulfill'd[2] of Faëry:
The Elf-queen with her jolly company
Dancèd full oft in many a greenè mead.
This was the old opinion as I read;
I speak of many hundred years ago,
But now can no man see none elvès mo'[3];
For now the greatè charity and prayéres
Of limitours[4] and other holy freres,
That searchen every land and every stream,
As thick as motès in the sunnè beam,
Blessing halls, chambers, kitchenès and bowers,
Cities, boroughs, castles high, and towers,
Thorpès, barnès, shepenes[5] and dairíes,
This maketh that there be no Faëries:
For there as wont to walken was an elf,
There walketh now the limitour himself
In undermealès[6] and in morrowings,
And saith his matins and his holy things
As he go'th in his limitatïoun:
Women may now go safely up and down;
In every bush, or under every tree,
There is none other Incubus but he,
And he ne will do thém no díshonour.[7]

And it so befell, that this King Arthur had in his household a lusty bachelor, who as he one day came riding from the river, saw a maiden walking before him, and grossly ill-treated her. For this oppression so great a clamour arose, and such earnest appeals were made unto the king, that the knight was condemned to death by course of law, and would have lost his head (such perhaps was then the statute), but that the queen and other ladies prayed so long unto the king for pardon, that he granted him his life for the time, and he gave him to the

[1] Arthur. [2] Filled, full. [3] More.
[4] Friars begging within the district limited or assigned to them.
[5] Stables. [6] At dinner times. [7] An ironical line.

queen to be entirely at her will to save him or to put him to death as she might choose. The queen thanketh the king with all her heart, and afterwards thus speaks to the knight,

When that she saw her time upon a day :

"Thou standest yet," quoth she, "in such a position that thou hast no surety for thy life." But

"I grant thy life, if thou canst tellen me
What thing is it that women most desiren ;
Beware, and keep thy neckè-bone from iron.
And if thou canst not tellen it anon,
Yet will I give thee leavè for to gone[1]
A twelvemonth and a day it for to lere[2]
An answer súffisant in this mattére ;
And surety will I have, ere that thou pace,
Thy body for to yielden in this place."

The knight was sad, and he sighed sorrowfully. But what? He may not do just what he pleaseth. And at last he chose to go, and return at the year's end with such answer as God would provide for him. He takes his leave, and goes forth on his way.

He seeketh every house and every place
Whereso he hopeth for to finden grace,
To learnen what thing women loven most ;
But he ne could arriven in no coast
Where as he mightè find in this mattére
Two creäturès according in fere.[3]
Some saiden women loven best richés,
Some said honóur, and some said jolliness,
Some rich array ;

some sensual pleasures,

And oftè time to be widów, and wed.

Some said that we be most contented in heart when we be flattered and praised ; and—I will not lie—he goes near the truth.

A man shall win us best with flattery ;
And with attendance, and with busïness
Be we ylimèd,[4] bothè more and less.[5]
And some men saiden that we loven best
For to be free, and do right as us lest ;[6]

[1] Go. [2] Learn. [3] According in fere—agreeing together.
[4] Caught as with birdlime.
[5] That is to say, great and little, or rich and poor. [6] Please.

And that no man reprove us of our vice,
But say that we be wise and nothing nice.[1]

But in truth there are none of us all that will not resent it, if a wight attack us on a sore point—and especially because he speaks truly of us:

Assay, and he shall find it that so doth;

for be we never so vicious within, we must be held to be wise and virtuous. And some said that we have great delight to be considered stable and also secret, and to dwell steadfastly in one purpose, and as not betraying matters that men have told to us. But that tale is not worth the handle of a rake. Pardie, we women can conceal nothing, as witness Midas. Will ye hear the tale?—

Ovid, among his other thingès small,
Said, Midas had undér his longè hairs,
Growing upon his head, two ass's ears;
The whichè vice he hid, as he best might,
Full subtlely from every mannès sight,
That, save his wife, there wist of it no mo'.
He lov'd her most, and trusted her alsó;
He prayèd her that to no creäture
She shouldè tellen of his dísfigure.
She swore him Nay, for all this world to win
She n'ouldè do that villainy or sin,
To make her husband have so foul a name:
She would not tell it for her owen shame.
But nathèless her thoughtè that she died
That she so long a counsel shouldè hide;
Her thought it swell so sore about her heart,
That needèly some word her must astart;[2]
And since she durst not tell it unto man,
Down to a marais[3] fastè by she ran,—
Till she came there her heartè was on fire;—
And as a bittern bumbleth in the mire,
She laid her mouth unto the water down.
"Betray me not, thou water, with thy soun,"
Quoth she, "to thee I tell it, and no mo',
Mine husband hath long ass's earès two.
Now is my heart all healed, now is it out,
I might no longer keep it, out of doubt."
Here may ye see, though we a time abide,
Yet out it must; we can no counsel hide.

If ye would hear the remnant of the tale, read Ovid, and there ye may learn it. The knight to whom my tale especially refers

[1] Foolish or silly. [2] Let escape. [3] Marsh.

when he saw that he might not thus arrive at the knowledge of what women love most, was very sorrowful in his spirit. But home he goeth—he may not tarry, for the day has arrived that he must turn homewards.

> And in his way it happen'd him to ride,
> In all his care, undér a forest side;
> Whereas he saw upon a dancè go
> Of ladies four and twenty, and yet mo'.[1]
> Toward this ilkè dance he drew full yern,[2]
> In hope that he some wisdom shouldè learn;
> But certainly ere he came fully there
> Yvanish'd was this dance, he wist not where;

and he saw no creature bearing life, except that on the green he beheld an old woman sitting—

> A fouler wight there may no man devise.

She arose and approached the knight, saying, "Sir knight, there lieth no way in this direction. Tell me, on your faith, what ye seek. Perchance

> it may the better be:
> These oldè folk con[3] muchel thing," quoth she.

"My dear mother," quoth this knight, "certainly I am but dead unless I say what thing it is that women desire most: could ye teach me I would requite well your hire."

> "Plight me thy truth here in my hand," quoth she,
> "The nextè thing that I requirè thee,
> Thou shalt it do, if it be in thy might,
> And I will tell it thee ere it be night."
> "Have here my trothè," quoth the knight, "I grant."[4]
> "Thennè," quoth she, "I dare me well avaunt,[5]
> Thy life is safe, for I will stand thereby,
> Upon my life the queen will say as I.
> Let see which is the proudest of them all,
> That weareth on a kerchief or a caul,
> That dare say nay of thing I shall thee teach.
> Let us go forth withouten morè speech."

Then whispered she a short lesson in his ear, and bade him to be glad and fearless.

When they arrived at the court, the knight said he had kept his day, as he had promised, and was ready with his answer.

[1] More. [2] Eagerly.

[3] Know, or can do—much, etc. The frequent use of this word in this sense shows that our ancestors were most thoroughly and practically aware that *knowledge* is *power*.

[4] Agree. [5] Boast, guarantee.

Full many a noble wife, and many a maid,
And many a widow (for that they be wise),
The queen herself sitting as a justíse,
Assembled be, his answer for to hear;
And afterward this knight was bid appear.
To every wight commanded was silénce,
And that the knight should tell in audïence
What thing that worldly women loven best.
This knight ne stood not still as doth a beast,
But to this questïon anon answér'd
With manly voice, that all the court it heard:
"My liegè lady, generally," quoth he,
"Women desiren to have sovereignty,
As well ovér their husband as their love,[1]
And for to be in mastery him above.
This is your most desire, though ye me kill;
Do as you list, I am here at your will."

In all the court there was neither maid, wife, nor widow that opposed what he said, but all declared that he was worthy to have his life:

And with that word up start this oldè wife[2]
Which that the knight saw sitting on the green.
"Mercy," quoth she, "my sovereign lady queen,
Ere that your court departè, do me right.
I taught this answer right unto this knight,
For which he plighted me his truthè there,
The firstè thing that I would him requere[3]
He would it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court then pray I thee, Sir knight,"
Quoth she, "that thou me take unto thy wife;
For well thou wo'st that I have kept thy life:
If I say false, say nay upon thy fay."
This knight answérd, "Alas! and wala wa![4]
I wot right well that such was my behest;
For Goddès love as choose a new request:
Take all my goods, and let my body go."
"Nay," quoth she then, "I shrew[5] us bothè two;
For though that I be foule, and old, and poor,
I n' ould for all the metal ne for the ore
That under earth is grave, or lieth above,
But if thy wife I were, and eke thy love."
"My love!" quoth he; "nay, my damnatïon!
Alas! that any of my natïon
Should ever so foully dísparagèd be."
But all for nought; the end is this, that he
Constrainèd was, he needès must her wed,
And take this oldè wife, and go with her to bed.

[1] Lover. [2] Woman. [3] Require. [4] Oh, dear! alas! [5] Curse.

Now perchance some men would say, that from negligence I do not care to tell you the joy and the array of the feast on the day of marriage, but I shall answer shortly that

there was no feast, no joy at all,
There was but heaviness and muchel sorrow;
For privily he wedded her on the morrow,
And all day after hid him as an owl,
So woe was him, his wife lookéd so foul.
* * * *

But this old wife evermore smiled upon him, and said,

"O dearè husband, *benedicite!*
Far'th[1] every knight thus with his wife as ye?
Is this the law of King Arthourès house?
Is every knight of his thus dangerous?
I am your owen love, and eke your wife,
I am she which that savèd hath your life,
And certes yet did I you ne'er unright:[2]
Why fare ye thus with me the firstè night?
Ye faren like a man that had lost his wit.
What is my guilt? for God's love tell me it,
And it shall be amended if I may."
"Amended!" quoth this knight, "alas! nay, nay,
It will not be amended, never mo';
Thou art so loathly, and so old alsó,
And thereto comen of so low a kind,
That little wonder is, though I wallów and wind,
So wouldè God mine heartè wouldè brest."[3]
"Is this," quoth she, "the cause of your unrest?"
"Yea, certainly," quoth he, "no wonder is."
"Now, sir," quoth she, "I could amend all this,
If that me list, ere it were dayès three,

so that ye might bear yourself towards me in a proper manner.

But for ye speaken of such gentleness
As is descended out of old richéss,
Therefore should ye be holden gentlemen;
Such arrogancè is not worth a hen.

Look who it is that is always most virtuous, alike in private and in public,

and most intendeth aye
To do the gentle deedès that he can,
Take *him* for the greatest gentleman.
Christ wills we claim of him our gentleness,
Not of our elders for their old richéss;

[1] Behaveth. [2] Wrong. [3] Burst.

For though they give us all their heritage,
For which we claim to be of high parage,[1]
Yet may they not bequeathen for no thing
To none of us their virtuous living,
That made them gentlemen ycallèd be,
And bade us follow them in such degree.

Well may the wise poet of Florence, Dante, say upon this matter, Full seldom riseth up by his small branches prowess of man. God, of his goodness, wills that we claim from him our gentleness. Of our elders we may claim only temporal things, that man may hurt and maim. Every one knows as well as I that if gentleness were planted naturally in a certain lineage down the line of descent, they would never cease in private or in public to do the fair offices of gentleness, and they might do no manner of villainy nor vice.

Take fire, and beare it in the darkest house
Betwixtè this and the Mount Caucasus,
And let men shut the doorès, and go thenne,
Yet will the fire as fair and lightè brenne[2]
As twenty thousand men might it behold;
His office natural aye will it hold,
Up' peril on my life, till that it die.

Here ye may well see that gentility is not annexed to possessions, since folk do not like the fire always perform the duty that properly belongs to them.

For God it wot, men may full often find
A lordès son do shame and villainy.
And he that will have praise of his gent'ry
For he was boren of a gentle house,
And had his elders noble and virtuous,
And n'ill[3] himselven do no gentle deedès,
Ne follow his gentle ancestor that dead is,
He is not gentle, be he duke or earl,
For villain's sinful deedès make a churl.

Gentility is but the renown of thine ancestors for their high goodness, and belongs not to thy person. Thy gentility cometh from God alone; thence cometh the very gentleness of grace. It is not bequeathed to us with our position. Think how noble, as Valerius saith, was that Tullus Hostilius who rose out of poverty to high rank. Read Seneca, and read also Boethius; there shall ye see it expressed, that, beyond doubt,—

—he is gentle that doth gentle deeds.

[1] Parentage. [2] Burn. [3] *Ne will*—will not.

And therefore, dear husband, I conclude thus: although mine ancestors were rude—

> Yet may the highè God (and so hope I)
> Granten me grace to liven virtuously;
> Then am I gentle when that I begin
> To liven virtuously and waiven sin.

And whereas ye refuse me for my poverty, the High God, on whom we believe, chose to lead his life in wilful poverty. And certes every man, maiden, or wife, may understand that Jesus, the king of heaven, would not choose a vicious living.

Glad poverty is certainly an honest thing, as Seneca and other learned writers tell us:—Whoso is satisfied with his poverty

> I hold him rich, all had he not a shirt.

He that coveteth is a poor wight, for he would have that which is not within his power.

> But he that nought hath, ne coveteth to have,
> Is rich, although ye hold him but a knave.[1]

True poverty is a proper sin,

> Juvenal saith of povert' merrily,
> The poorè man when he go'th by the way,
> Before the thievès he may sing and play.
> Povért' is hateful good; and, as I guess,
> A full great bringer out of busïness.

A great amender also of wisdom to him that taketh it in patience. Poverty is this, however strange it seem, a possession that no man will challenge.

> Povért' full often, when a man is low,
> Makes him his God, and eke himself to know:
> Povért' a spectacle is, as thinketh me,
> Through which he may his very[2] friendès see.

And therefore, sir, since that I grieve you not, reprove me no more for my poverty.

And now, sir, ye reprove me for my age. Certainly, sir, though no authority were to be found in any book, ye gentlemen of honour say that men should reverence an old person, and, in your gentleness, call him father; and yet authors shall I find, as I guess [to confirm this].

Now, whereas you say I am old and foul, then dread ye not to be wronged as a husband; for ugliness and age be great

[1] Servant—poor man. [2] Real, true.

wardens upon chastity. But, nevertheless, since I know what delights you, I shall fulfil your desires." "Choose now," quoth she, "one of these two things: to have me foul and old till that I die,—

And be to you a truë humble wife,
And never you displease in all my life;
Or ellès ye will have me young and fair,
And take your ádventure of the repair[1]
That shall be to your house, because of me?

Choose now yourself whichever best pleases you." The knight considers, and sighs deeply, but at last he said:—

"My lady and my love, and wife so dear,
I put me in your wisè governance;
Chooseth yourself which may be most pleasánce
And most honóur to you and me alsó;
I do no force[2] the whether of the two;
For as you liketh, it sufficeth me."
"Then have I got the mastery," quoth she,
"Since I may govern and choosen as me lest?"[3]
"Yea, certes, wife," quoth he, "I hold it best."
"Kiss me," quoth she, "we be no longer wroth,
For by my truth I will be to you *both*;
This is to say, yea, bothè fair and good.
I pray to God that I may starven wood[4]
But I be to you all so good and true,
As e'er was wife since that the world was new;
And but I be to-morrow as fair to seen
As any lady, empèress, or queen,
That is betwixt the east and eke the west,
Do by my life right even as you lest.[3]
Cast up the curtains, and lookè what this is."
And when the knight saw verily all this,
That she so fair was, and so young thereto,
For joy he hent[5] her in his armès two:
His hearte bathèd in a bath of bliss.

A thousand times he kissed her. And she obeyed him in everything that might add to his pleasure or his love. And thus they lived in perfect joy unto their lives' end.

[1] Resort. [2] I do not care. [3] Please. [4] Die mad. [5] Caught.

REMARKS ON THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

VARIANTS and analogues of the tale of 'The Knight and the Loathly Lady' are known in Sanskrit, Turkish, Kaffir, Gaelic, and Icelandic, the Gawaine division of the Arthur cycle, and in Gower's 'Tale of Florent' (*Confessio Amantis*, book i.), which is no doubt from a French original that has not yet been printed, even if it is now known. Sketches of these will be found in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues.'[1]

Gower (in his 'Florent') and Chaucer have thus again worked upon the same materials. Here, too, Dryden has continued the business of translating his illustrious predecessor with about the same amount of success as in the Knight's tale. One illustration—of a different nature from any given in the tale just mentioned—will suffice. The humour of the two poets shall furnish our present parallel. No one can have read without being charmed by the simple, unobtrusive, yet rich and overflowing humour of the story of Midas from Ovid in Chaucer; no one can have avoided something like a sense of pleasurable surprise to see how, even in such a story, the poetical power can suddenly raise everything it touches, as in the lines—

> And as a bittern bumbleth in the mire,
> She laid her mouth unto the water down, etc.

Well, here in contrast with Chaucer's we place Dryden's version of the same story; and we can assure our readers they will be well repaid for the trouble of comparing them line by line, if they have still a doubt as to the injury that the later poet has done the earlier by not merely enjoying the fame that properly belongs to Chaucer, but by dimming the brightness of the morning-star of our poetry by interposing between us and him the veil of his own less spiritual intellect.

CHAUCER'S *Tale of Midas*:

Ovid,—

> said, Midas had undér his longè hairs
> Growing upon his head two ass's ears,
> The whichè vice[2] he hid as he best might
> Full subtlęly from every mannès sight,
> That save his wife there wist of it no mo';
> He lov'd her most, and trusted her alsó;
> He prayèd her that to no creäture
> She shouldè tellen of his dísfigúre.
> She swore him nay, for all this world to win,
> She n'ouldè do that villainy or sin,

[1] Pp. 482-524. [2] Blemish.

To make her husband have so foul a name :
She would not tell it for her owen shame.
But nathèless her thoughtè that she died
That she so long a counsel shouldè hide ;
Her thought it swell so sore about her heart
That needèly some word her must astart ;
And since she durst not tell it unto man,
Down to a marais fastè by she ran ;
Till she came there her heartè was on fire,
And as a bittern bumbleth in the mire,
She laid her mouth unto the water down :
"Betray me not, thou water, with thy soun,"
Quoth she ; "to thee I tell it, and no mo',
My husband hath long ass's earès two :
Now is my heart all healed, now is it out ;
I might no longer keep it out of doubt."

DRYDEN'S *Tale of Midas.*

who,—

By Phœbus was endow'd with asses ears,
Which under his long locks he well concealed
(As monarchs' vices must not be reveal'd),
For fear the people have 'em in the wind,
Who long ago were neither dumb nor blind ;
Nor apt to think from Heaven their title springs,
Since Jove and Mars left off begetting kings :
This Midas knew ; and durst communicate
To none but to his wife his ears of state :
One must be trusted, and he thought her fit,
As passing prudent, and a parlous wit.
To this sagacious confessor he went,
And told her what a gift the gods had sent,
But told it under matrimonial seal,
With strict injunction never to reveal.
The secret heard, she plighted him her troth
(And sacred sure is every woman's oath),
The royal malady should rest unknown,
Both for her husband's honour and her own.
But ne'ertheless she pined with discontent ;
The counsel rumbled till it found a vent.
The thing she knew she was obliged to hide ;
By interest and by oath the wife was tied ;
But if she told it not, the woman died.
Loth to betray a husband and a prince,
But she must *burst or blab ;* and no pretence
Of honour tied her tongue from self-defence.
A marshy ground commodiously was near,
Thither she ran, and held her breath for fear,
Lest if a word she spoke of anything,
That word might be the secret of the king.

Thus full of counsel to the fen she went,
Grip'd all the way, and longing for a vent;
Arrived, by pure necessity compelled,
On her *majestic marrow-bones* she kneel'd;
Then to the water's brink she laid her head,
And as a bittern bumps within a reed,
"To thee alone, O lake," she said, "I tell
(And as thy queen, command thee to conceal),
Beneath his locks the King my husband wears
A goodly royal pair of asses' ears;
Now have I eased my bosom of the pain
Till the next longing fit return again."

After this, one need not to be surprised to find that the chief character of the Wife of Bath's Tale is utterly ruined in Dryden's hands. Chaucer never for an instant forgets she is only wearing a mask of age and ugliness in order to obtain an extraordinary opportunity of purifying and elevating the knight's character by teaching him the hollowness of beauty without virtue, and of rank without desert. The poet is most careful, therefore, to preserve a perfect harmony between what she is beneath the mask and what she shall appear to be when the mask is thrown aside; namely, a beautiful, loving, pure, and lofty spirit. Every word she speaks impresses us with a respect for her, gradually rising into something like veneration. Of course, when the knight with such humorous pathos begs her—

Take all my goods and let my body go,

she is deaf to his request, because she knows—what he does not—that the time will come when he will reciprocate with equal earnestness the feeling she expresses towards him:—

I n'ould for all the metal ne for the ore
That under earth is grave,[1] or lieth above,
But if thy wife I were, and eke thy love.

But imagine for a moment what would be Chaucer's sentiments if, with his object in the tale—his design as to the chief character—he could live again just now, and find a brother poet attributing to the knight's bride such motives as are conveyed in the following lines:—

In vain he proffered all his goods to save
His body, destin'd to that living grave.
The licorish hag rejects the pelf with scorn,
And nothing but the man will serve her turn.

The combination of error and evil in these lines is so great as

[1] Buried.

almost to defy analysis or exposure. It is undoing in a couplet all that Chaucer sought to do by the whole poem, which becomes in the process purposeless, incoherent, prosaic, absurd. The lady, for instance, has only to reveal herself in her true personal character before the court to ensure a cheerful husband at once, if that be her great object. Yet thus it is Dryden understood and translated the Wife of Bath's Tale, so charming alike in its purpose, machinery, and mode of execution. We know nothing more dramatic and playful than the surprise towards the close when we find how the knight's lesson as to what women most desire is brought home to him by his teacher, who, while pursuing higher and more evident objects, has obtained that too; thereby giving the finishing touch to the story. Puzzled by the difficulties which the superior wisdom of his aged-looking bride has raised, the knight wisely consents to let the same wisdom resolve them. He says—

"I put me in your wisè governance."

Then, says she,—

"have I got the mastery,
Since I may choose and govern as me lest?"[1]
"Yea, certes, wife," quoth he, "I hold it best."

And whatever may be said on the different sides of that mighty question—matrimonial sovereignty,—we should certainly say that whenever a man finds he has got such a wife as the one here described, he cannot do better than imitate the policy of the knight, her husband.

[1] Please.

THE FRIAR'S TALE.

THERE was once dwelling in my country an archdeacon, a man of high rank, who punished with great boldness all kinds of libertinism and other vices, such as witchcraft, defamation, adultery, misconduct by churchwardens, violation of wills and contracts, neglect of sacraments, also usury and simony; but libertines he made the most severely to suffer. They should certainly sing if they were caught. Those, too, who paid insufficient tithes were shamefully ruined if any person would complain of them; no pecuniary infliction might save them:—

> For smallè tithès and for small off'ríng
> He made the people piteously to sing;
> For ere the bishop caught them in his hook,
> They weren in the archèdeacon's book;
> And had he through his jurisdictïon
> Power to have of them correctïon.
> He had a sumpnour ready to his hand,
> A slier boy was none in Engèland.

For secretly he had his spies, who taught him where it might avail [to find offenders]. He could even spare a libertine or two to teach their practises to a couple of dozen more. And though this sumpnour here[1] be as mad as a hare, I will not spare to tell his ribaldry. For we are out of their correction. They have no jurisdiction over us, nor ever shall have as long as they live. . . This false thief, this sumpnour, had always vicious women—

> ready to his hand
> As any hawk, to lure in Engèland;
> That told him all the secrets that they knew,
> For their acquaintance was not come of new.

They were his private informers. He obtained for himself by their means a great profit. His master knew not always what

[1] Another of the Canterbury Pilgrims, between whom and the Friar there has been passing a smart skirmish of jibes and malice.

he won. He would, without a mandate, summon an ignorant man, on

pain of Christè's curse,
And they were glad to fillè well his purse,

and make great feasts for him at the ale-house.

And right as Judas haddè purses small
And was a thief, right such a thief was he ;
His master had not half his duëty.

He was, to give him fitting praise, a thief, a sumpnour, and a pander.

. . . . . .

And so befell, that onès on a day
This sumpnour ever waiting on his prey,
Rode forth to summon a widow, an old ribibe,[1]
Feigning a cause, for he would have a bribe.
And happened that he saw before him ride
A gay yeomán undér a forest side ;
A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen ;
He had upon, a courtepy[2] of green,
A hat upon his head with fringes black.
"Sir," quoth this sumpnour, "hail, and well o'ertake!"
"Welcome," quoth he, "and every good felláw ;
Whither rid'st thou under this greenè shaw ?"[3]
Saidè this yeoman, "Wilt thou far to-day ?"
This sumpnour answerèd, and saidè "Nay ;
Here fastè by," (quoth he) "is mine intent
To riden, for to raisen up a rent
That 'longeth to my lordès duëty."
"Ah ! art thou then a bailiff ?" "Yea," quoth he.
He durstè not for very filth and shame
Say that he was a sumpnour, for the name.
"*De par Dieux*," quoth the yeoman, "levè brother,
Thou art a bailiff, and I am another.
I am unknowen as in this country ;
Of thine acquaintance I will prayen thee,
And eke of brotherhood, if it thee lest.[4]
I havè gold and silver in my chest;
If that thee happè come into our shire,
All shall be thine, right as thou wilt desire."
"*Grand-mercy*," quoth this sumpnour, "by my faith !"

Each then layeth his hand in that of the other as a pledge of his truth that they will be sworn brethren unto their death.

[1] A musical instrument ; remarkable probably, like the fiddle, for its inharmonious character when old and cracked. Farther on, we shall find the same aged dame called an old rebeck, that is, an old fiddle.
[2] Short cloak. [3] Wood. [4] Please.

In dalliancè forth they ride and play.
This sumpnour, which that was as full of jangles,[1]
As full of venom be[2] these wariangles,[3]
And ever énquiring on every thing,—
"Brother," quoth he, "where is now your dwellíng,
Another day if that I should you seech?"[4]
This yeoman him answér'd in softè speech,
"Brother," quoth he, "far in the north country,
Where, as I hope, sometime I shall thee see.
Ere we depart[5] I shall thee so well wiss,[6]
That of mine house ne shalt thou never miss."
"Now, brother," quoth this sumpnour, "I you pray,
Teach me, while thát we riden by the way,
(Since that ye be a bailiff, as am I)
Some subtlety; as tell me faithfully,
In mine offícè how that I may win;
And sparè not for conscience or for sin,
But, as my brother, tell me how do ye?"
"Now, by my truthè, brother mine," said he,[7]
"As I shall tellen thee a faithful tale,
My wages be full strait,[8] and eke full smale:
My lord to me is hard and dangerous,[9]
And mine office is full laborïous,
And therefore by extortïon I live;
Forsooth I take all that men will me give.
Always by sleightè or by violence
From year to year I winnè my dispense:
I can no better tellen faithfully."
"Now, certes (quoth this sumpnour), so fare I,
I sparè not to taken, God it wot,
But if it be too heavy or too hot.
What I may get in counsel privily
No morè conscïence of that have I.

Were it not for my extortion, I might not live. Of such tricks, no confessor shall shrive me:

Stomach nor conscïencè know I none;

I curse every one of these father confessors.

Well be we met, by God and by Saint Jame!
But, levè[10] brother, tellè me thy name,"

[1] Chattering. [2] As be.
[3] Cotgrave explains the wariangle to be a small wood-pecker, black and white of colour, and but half as big as the ordinary green one. Speght however supposes it to refer to the Butcher-bird.
[4] Seek. [5] [Depart from each other]. [6] Direct. [7] The Yeoman.
[8] Narrow. [9] Difficult to please, and so, even in the modern sense, dangerous, as regards the consequences that may flow from his displeasure. [10] Dear.

Quoth this sumpnour. In this meanè while
This yeoman 'gan a little for to smile.
"Brother," quoth he, "wilt thou that I thee tell?
I am a fiend; my dwelling is in hell;
And here I ride about my purchasing,[1]
To wot whe'r men will give me any thing.
My purchase is th' effect of all my rent,
Look how thou ridest for the same intent
To winnen goods, thou reckest never how:
Right so fare I, for riden I would now
Unto the worldès endè for a prey."
"Ah," quoth this sumpnour, "*benedicite!*
I ween'd[2] ye were a yeoman truëly,
Ye have a mannès shape as well as I:
Have ye a figure then determinate
In hellè, there ye be in your estate?"
"Nay, certainly," quoth he, "there have we none,
But when us liketh we can take us one;
Or ellès make you seem[3] that we be shape
Some timè like a man, or like an ape;
Or like an angel can I ride or go."

It is no very wonderful thing, though it be so; since a vagabond juggler can deceive thee;

"And parfay, yet can I more craft than he."
"Why," quoth this sumpnour, "ride ye then or gone
In sundry wise, and not alwáy in one?"
"For," quoth he, "we will us in such formè make,
As most abl' is our preyè for to take."
"What makèth you to have all this labóur?"
"Full many a causè, levè Sir Sumpnóur,"
Saidè this fiend. "But all thing hath a time;
The day is short, and it is passèd prime,
And yet ne won I nothing in this day.
I will intend to winning if I may,
And not intend our thingès to declare.
For, brother mine, thy wit is all too bare
To understand, although I told them thee.
But for thou askèd why labóuren we;—
For some time we be Goddès instruments,
And meanès to do his commandèments,
When that him list, upon his creätures,
In divers acts and in divérse figúres:
Withouten him we have no might certaín,
If that him listè standen there again.[4]
And sometime, at our prayër, have we leave,
Only the body and not the soulè grieve;
Witness on Jobè,[5] whom we did full woe.

[1] Seeking, cadging. [2] Believed. [3] Believe.
[4] There-against. [5] Job.

And sometime have we might on both the soul and body, and sometime we are suffered to seek for [unguarded points]

Upon a man, and do his soul unrest
And not his body, and all is for the best.
When he withstandeth our temptation
It is a cause of his salvation,
Albeit so it was not our intent
He should be safe, but that we would him hent.[1]
And some time be we servant unto man,
As to the archèbishop Saint Dunstán,
And to the apostolis, servant eke[2] was I."
"Yet tell me," quoth this sumpnour, "faithfully,
Make ye you newè bodies thus alwáy
Of elements?" The fiend answèrèd "Nay.
Some time we feignè, and some time we rise
With deadè bodies, in full wondrous wise,
And speak as reasónably, and fair, and well,
As to the Pythoness did Samuél;
And yet will some men say it was not he:
I do no force[3] of your divinity.
But one thing warn I thee; I will not jape;[4]
Thou wilt algatès[5] weet[6] how we be shape:
Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dear,
Come where thee needeth nothing for to lere;[7]
For thou shalt, by thine own experience,
Con, in a chair red, of this sentence
Bet[ter] than Virgil, while he was on live;
Or Dant' also. Now let us riden blive,[8]
For I will holden company with thee
Till it be so that thou forsakè me."
"Nay," quoth this sumpnour, "that shall nought betide,
I am a yeoman, knowen is full wide;
My truthè will I hold, as in this case;
For though thou be the devil Sathanas,
My truthè will I hold to thee, my brother,
As I have sworn, and each of us to other,
For to be truë brethren in this case,
For both we go abouten our purchase.
Take thou thy part, and that men will thee give,
And I shall mine, thus may we bothè live;
And if any of us have more than other,
Let him be true, and part it with his brother."
"I grantè," quoth the devil, "by my fay."
And with that word, they riden forth their way.

And as they entered the end of the town, towards which the sumpnour had directed their course,—

[1] Catch, seize. [2] Also. [3] Take no heed. [4] Play tricks.
[5] Always. [6] Know. [7] Learn. [8] Quickly.

They saw a cart that chargèd was with hay,
Which that a carter drove forth in his way.
Deep was the way, for which the cartè stood;
The carter smote, and cried as he were wood.[1]
"Heit Brok! heit Scot! what, spare ye for the stones?
The fiend (quoth he) you fetch, body and bones;

so much trouble have I had with you even from the very time that ye were foaled:—

The devil have all, both cart, and horse, and hay!"
This sumpnour saidè, "Here shall we see play;"
And near the fiend he drew, as nought ne were,[2]
Full privily, and rounèd[3] in his ear:—
"Harkè, my brother, harkè, by thy faith;

Hearest thou not what the carter says?

Hent[4] it anon, for he hath given it thee,
Both hay and caples[5] and eke his cart pardé."
"Nay," quoth the devil, "God wot never a del;[6]
It is not his intentè, trust thou well:
Ask him thyself, if thou not trowest[7] me,
Or ellès stint a while and thou shalt see."
This carter thwacketh his horse upon the coup,
And they began to drawen and to stoop.
"Heit now," quoth he, "There! Jesu Christ you bless,
And all his handy work both more and less!
That was well twight,[8] my owen Liard[9] boy,
I pray God save thy body, and Saint Loy[10]:
Now is my cart out of the slough pardie."
"Lo, brother," quoth the fiend, "what told I thee?
Here may ye see, mine owen dearè brother,
The carter spake one thing, and thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our voyáge;
Here win I nothing upon carriàge."

When they had gone a little way out of the town, the Sumpnour began to whisper to his brother:

"Brother," quoth he, "here wonneth an old rebeck,[11]
That had almost as lief to lose her neck
As for to give a penny of her good;[12]
I will have twelve pence though that she go wood,[13]
Or I will summon her to our office;
And yet, God wot, I know of her no vice;
But for thou canst not as in this country
Winnen thy cost, take here example of me."
This sumpnour clappèd at the widow's gate;
"Come out," he said, "thou oldè very trate;[14]
I trow thou hast some frere or priest with thee."

[1] Mad. [2] Nothing of importance. [3] Whispered. [4] Seize.
[5] Cattle. [6] Never a bit. [7] Believest. [8] Pulled. [9] Grey.
[10] Eloy. [11] Fiddle. See *ante*, page 275. [12] Goods. [13] Mad.
[14] Trot.

"Who clappeth?" said this widow; "*Benedicite!*
God save you, sir, what is your sweetè will?"
"I have," quoth he, "a summons of a bill:
Up' pain of cursing, lookè that thou be
To-morrow before our archèdeacon's knee,
To answer to the court of certain things."
"Now," quoth she, "Jesu Christ, and King of kings,
So wisely helpè me, as I ne may:[1]
I have been sick, and that full many a day:
I may not go so far (quoth she) nor ride
But I be dead, so prick'th it in my side.
May I not ask a libel, Sir Sumpnour,
And answer there by my procúrator[2]
To suchè thing as men will óppose me?"
"Yes," quoth this sumpnour, "pay anon—let see—
Twelve pence to me, and I thee will acquit:
I shall no profit have thereby but lit[3];
My master hath the profit, and not I.
Come off, and let me riden hastily;
Give me my twelve pence, I may no longer tarry."
"Twelve pence!" quoth she; "now Lady Saintè Mary,
So wisely help me out of care and sin,
This widè world though that I shouldè win,
Ne have I not twelve pence within my hold;
Ye knowen well that I am poor and old;

show then your charity upon me, poor wretch."—"Nay, then," quoth he, "the foul fiend fetch me if I excuse thee, though thou shouldest be ruined."

"Alas!" quoth she, "God wot, I have no guilt."
"Pay me," quoth he, "or by the sweet Saint Anne,
As I will bear away thy newè pan
For debtè, which thou owest me of old,

when that thou wert false to thy husband, and

I paid at home for thy correctïon."
"Thou liest," quoth she, "by my salvatïon;
Ne was I never ere now, widow or wife,
Summoned unto your court in all my life;
Ne never I was but of my body true.
Unto the devil, rough and black of hue,
Give I thy body and the pan alsó."
And when the devil heard her cursen so
Upon her knees, he said in this mannére,
"Now Mabily, mine owen mother dear,
Is this your will in earnest that ye say?"
"The devil," quoth she, "fetch him ere he dey,[4]

[1] Cannot. [2] Proctor. [3] Little. [4] Die.

And pan and all, but he will him repent."
"Nay, oldè stot, that is not mine intent,"
Quoth this sumpnour, "for to repenten me
For any thing that I have had of thee:
I would I had thy smock, and every cloth."
"Now brother," quoth the devil, "be not wroth;
Thy body and this pan are mine by right:
Thou shalt with me to hellè yet[1] to-night,
Where thou shalt knowen of our privity
More than a master of divinity."

And with that word the foul fiend seized him, body and soul, and took him to the place where these sumpnours have their inheritance. And God, that made mankind after his own image, save and guide us one and all, and incline this sumpnour[2] a good man to become.

REMARKS ON THE FRIAR'S TALE.

PERHAPS the most remarkable feature of this tale is the modern air that pervades throughout the style of thought, humour, and language. Put aside the peculiarity of the sumpnour's character and office, and a few of the words and pronunciations that bear the impress of antiquity, and we might suppose the whole written but yesterday. There is, perhaps, no other tale in Chaucer's collection which requires so little to be altered or explained, in order to adapt it to readers of the present time.

We have spoken of the peculiarity of the character and office of the sumpnour; and it might be supposed that the choice of such a character in the fourteenth century, when he was every where seen moving to and fro upon his rascally business, must at least partially unfit the tale for our enjoyment in the nineteenth. But it is not so. Nay, we think the tale is only the more interesting from the novelty that such an actor gives to it. But the secret of this unfading interest is no doubt to be found in the "spirit of life" that poets, like Chaucer, put into every thing, and in that mode of treatment which arises from the unlimited compass of their intellectual vision, and which causes them to be ever raising the particular into the universal. Thus, on reading Chaucer's Tale, it is not the sumpnour, nor the ecclesiastical abuses of which he was the instrument and examplar, that we think of, so much as the *cheat*, the

[1] Even. [2] The pilgrim before mentioned.

impudent, amusing, utterly unprincipled cheat. And surely we know *him* well enough; we are every day—one or other of us—finding but too many reasons for knowing *him* and his class, who, in the unfathomable depth of their rapacity, let nothing escape them that they can seize, unless

> it be too heavy, or too hot,

and who might each of them say with the sumpnour,

> Stomach nor conscïencè know I none.

The quiet humour that prevails throughout this tale is perfectly delicious. We may refer to three examples out of a host :—the yeoman's (or fiend's) answer to the question put by the sumpnour, as to where he lives,

> This yeoman him answèr'd in *softè speech*,
> "Brother," quoth he, "far in the north country;—

the further information given a little afterwards, when the fiend tells the sumpnour

> "Thou shalt here afterward, my brother dear,
> Come where thou needest nothing for to lere;
> For thou shalt by thine own experïence,
> Con in a chaïr red of this sentence,
> Better than Virgil while he was on live,
> Or Dant' also."

And, lastly, the conclusion, when he informs the entrapped victim in the midst of all his roguery and self confidence,

> "Thou shalt with me to hellè yet to-night,
> Where thou shalt knowen of our privity
> *More than a master of divinity*:—

a touch of satire that must have told with irresistible effect upon the theologians of the day, whose professed knowledge of these and similiar subjects was (and with their successors still is) in a ludicrously inverse ratio to the materials afforded them.

The only originals—or rather analogues—yet known of Chaucer's 'Friar's Tale' are two short medieval Latin stories reprinted in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues,' pp. 105-6.

Dr. Furnivall's side-notes to them are as follow:—

1. A seneschal, hard to the poor, is met by another man who asks him his business. "Grinding the poor, justly or unjustly." "What's yours?" "Taking anything that's curst, and given to the devil." A poor man curses his calf for not going straight to market, but not with his heart, so the fiend can't take it. But when some poor folk curse the seneschal with all their hearts, the fiend carries him off.

2. A grasping lawyer, out to gather prey, met the devil in the form of a man, and couldn't get quit of him. A poor man, angry with his pig, said, "Devil take you!" But as he didn't say it from his heart, the devil couldn't take the pig; nor could he a child, to which its brother said, "Devil take you!" When, however, some townsmen saw the lawyer coming, they all cried out, "May the devil take you!" And as they said it from the bottom of their hearts, the devil carried the lawyer off, as his man bore witness.

THE CLERK'S TALE.

THERE is at the west endè of Itaîlle,[1]
Down at the root of Vesulus[2] the cold,
A lusty plain abundant of victaîlle;
Where many a town and tower thou may'st behold,
That founded were in time of fathers old,
And many another délectable sight,
And Saluces this noble country hight.[3]

A marquis was once lord of that land, as his worthy father had been before him. Obedient and ever ready to perform his commands were all his subjects from high to low. Thus in delight he lives, and hath done, for a long time, beloved and dreaded, through the favour of fortune, both by his lords and his commons. To speak of lineage also, he was the gentlest born of Lombardy. He had a fair person, he was strong, and young in years: full of honour and courtesy, and possessed discretion enough to guide his country. In some things, however, this young lord Walter (for that was his name) was to be reprehended.

I blame him thus, that he considered nought
In timè coming what might him betide,
But on his lust présent[4] was all his thought,
And for to hawk and hunt on every side.
Well nigh all other carès let he slide,
And eke he n'ouldè (that was worst of all)
Wedden no wife for nought that might befall.

On that point, and that only, his people felt so sorely aggrieved that on a certain day they went to him in a crowd; and one of them, either the wisest of their number, or the one that was most likely to be acceptable to the lord, spake thus:—

"O noble marquis! your humanity
Assureth us, and giveth us hardiness,
As oft as time is of necessity,
That we to you may tell our heaviness;
Accepteth, lord, now of your gentleness,
That we with piteous heart unto you 'plain,
And let your earès not my voice disdain.

[1] Italy. [2] Vesuvius. [3] Was called. [4] Present pleasure.

And have I nought to do in this mattére
More than another man hath in this place,
Yet for as much as ye, my lord so dear,
Have always showèd me favoúr and grace,
I dare the better ask of you a space
Of audïence, to showen our request,
And ye, my lord, to do right as you lèst.[1]

For certes, lord, so well us liketh you
And all your work, and e'er have done, that we,
Ne coulden not ourselves devisen how
We mightè live more in felicity,
Save one thing, lord, if it your willè be,
That for to be a wedded man you lest.[1]
Then were your people in sovereign heartès rest.

Boweth your neck undér that blissful yoke
Of sovèreígnty, and not of servíce,
Which that men clepen[2] spousal or wedlóck:
And thinketh, lord, among your thoughtès wise,
How that our dayès pass in sundry wise;
For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
Aye fleets the time, it will no man abide.

And though your greenè youthè flower as yit,[3]
In creepeth age alway as still as stone,
And death menáceth every age, and smit[4]
In each estate, for there escapeth none;
And as certaín, as we know every one
That we shall die, as úncertain we all
Be of that day, that death shall on us fall.

Accept then the true intent of those who never refused to perform your commands. We will, with your consent, choose you a wife in as short a time as possible, born of the gentlest and best of the land; so that, as far as we can judge, the marriage ought to appear both an honour to God and to you.

Deliver us out of all this busy drede,
And take a wife for highè Goddès sake;
For if it so befell, as God forbid,
That through your death your lineäge should slake,[5]
And that a strangè súccessor should take
Your heritage, O! woe were us on live!
Wherefore we pray you hastily to wive."

Their meek prayer, and their pitiable aspect, touched the marquis with pity. "Ye will," quoth he, "mine own dear people, constrain me to that I have never thought of. I

[1] Please. [2] Call. [3] Yet. [4] Smiteth. [5] Slacken—cease.

rejoiced in my liberty (which is seldom found in marriage), and now, whereas I was free, I must enter into servitude.

But nathèless I see your true intent,
And trust upon your wit, and have done aye;
Wherefore of my free will I will assent
To wedden me, as soon as ever I may:
But there as ye have proffered me to-day
To choosen me a wife, I will release
That choice, and pray you of that proffer cease.

For God, it wot, that children often been
Unlike their worthy elders them before:
Bounty comes all of God, nought of the strene [1]
Of which they been engendered and ybore:
I trust in Goddès bounty, and therefore
My marriage, and mine estate, and rest,
I him betake; he may do as him lest.[2]

Let me alone in choosing of my wife;
That charge upon my back I will endure:
But I you pray, and charge upon your life,
That what wife that I take, ye me assure
To worship, while that hér life may endure,
In word and work, both here and everywhere,
As she an emperórès daughter were.

And farthermore this shall ye swear, that ye,
Against my choice shall never grutch[3] ne strive;
For since I shall forego my liberty
At your request, as ever may I thrive,
There as mine heart is set, there will I wive.
And, but ye will assent in such mannére,
I pray you speak no more of this mattére."

With all their hearts they assented and swore to what he wished. Not one wight said "nay." But, ere they went, they besought him of his grace that he would grant them a certain day for his marriage, as soon as he could;

For yet alway the people somewhat dread
Lest that the marquis wouldè no wife wed.

He granted them therefore a day, such as pleased him, on which he would be certainly wedded, saying, he did all this at their request. With humble and obedient hearts they thanked him fervently, kneeling, and thus their purpose being accomplished, they take their way home again.

[1] Strain, race. [2] It pleases. [3] Murmur—be discontented.

And hereupon he to his officers
Commandeth for the feastè to purvey,
And to his privy knightès and squiérs
Such chargè gave as he list on them lay,
And they to his commandèment obey;
And each of them doth [all] his diligence
To do unto the feast all reverence.

THE SECOND PART.

NOT far from that place of honour in which the marquis determined upon his marriage, there stood a village, delightful to the eye, in which the poor folk of the neighbourhood had their feast and their lodging, and of their labour took their sustenance, after that the earth had given them plenty.

Among this pourè folk there dwelt a man
Which that was holden poorest of them all;
But highè God sometimè senden can
His grace unto a little ox's stall.
Janicola, men of that thorpe[1] him call.
A daughter had he, fair enough to sight,
And Grisildis this youngè maiden hight.[2]

But if we speak of her virtuous beauty,—

Then was she one the fairest under sun.
Full poorèly yfosterd up was she;
No licorous lust was in her body run:
Well oft'ner of the well than of the tun
She drank; and for she wouldè virtue please,
She knew well labour, but no idle ease.

But though this maiden tender were of age,
Yet in the breast of her virginity
There was enclosèd ripe and sad courage;[3]
And in great reverence and charity,
Her oldè poorè father foster'd she:
A few sheep, spinning,[4] on the field she kept;
She wouldè not be idle till she slept.

And when she homeward came, she wouldè bring
Wortès and other herbès timès oft,
The which she shred and seeth'd for her living;
And made her bed full hard and nothing soft,

and still she kept up the life of her father,

With every obeisance and diligence
That child may do to father's reverence.

[1] Village.
[2] Was called.
[3] A steadfast and mature spirit.
[4] For to spin their wool.

Upon this poor creature, Grisilde, the marquis has often fixed his eye, whilst hunting, and when it so happened that he saw her, he gazed not with the wanton look of folly, but in an earnest manner would commune with himself upon her behaviour. For in his heart he commended her womanly qualities, and also her virtue, in which she surpassed others of so young an age,

as well in cheer as deed.

For though the people have no great insight into virtue, he considered rightly her goodness, and determined that he would wed her only, if he ever should wed.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
Tellen what woman that it shouldè be,
For which marvaillè wond'red many a man,
And saiden, when they were in privity,
"Will not our lord yet leave his vanity?
Will he not wed? Alas! Alas the while!
Why will he thus himself and us beguile?"

Nevertheless, the marquis caused to be made,

gemmès set in gold and in azúre,
Broaches and ringès, for Grisilda's sake;

and of her clothing he took the measure from a maiden whose stature was like her own; and he also prepared all other ornaments that should be suitable for such a wedding.

The time approached,—nine of the clock,—when the wedding should take place. All the palace was put in array, both halls and chambers, each in its degree. The houses of office were stuffed with plenty. Thou mightest see there all kinds of dainty provision that may be found within the limits of Italy. The royal marquis, richly arrayed, with the lords and ladies in his company that were bidden to the feast, and also the knights of his retinue, with many a sound of various melody, takes his way into the village of which I told you.

Grisilde of this (God wot) full innocent
That for her shapen was all this array,
To fetchen water at a well is went,
And cometh home as soon as ever she may;
For well she had heard say that ilkè day
The marquis shouldè wed, and if she might,
She would have seën somewhat of that sight.

She said, "I will with other maidens stond,
That be my fellows, in our door, and see

The marchioness, and therefore will I fond[1]
To do at home, as soon as it may be,
The labour which that 'longeth unto me;
And then I may at leisure her behold,
If she this way into the castle hold."

And as she would ovér the threshold gone[2]
The marquis came, and 'gan her for to call;
And she set down her water-pot anon
Beside the threshold of this ox's stall;
And down upon her knees she 'gan to fall,
And with sad countenancè kneeleth still,
Till she had heard what was the lordès will.

This thoughtful marquis spake unto this maid
Full soberly, and said in this mannére;
"Where is your father, Grisildis?" he said,
And she with reverence and humble cheer
Answérèd; "Lord, he is all ready here."

And without further delay she goeth in and fetches her father to the marquis.

He by the hand then taketh this old man,
And saidè thus, when he him had aside;
"Janicola, I neither may nor can
Longer the pleasure of mine heartè hide:
If that ye vouchèsafe, what so betide,
Thy daughter will I take, ere that I wend,
As for my wife unto her livès end.

Thou lovest me, I wot it well, certaín,
And art my faithful liegèman ybore,
And all that liketh me, I dare well sain,[3]
It liketh thee, and 'specially therefore
Tell me that point as ye have heard before,
If that thou wilt unto that purpose draw,
To taken me as for thy son-in-law?"

This sudden case so astonished the man that he waxed red, and stood abashed and quaking: he could hardly speak. But he said, "Lord, my will is as ye will, nor against your liking may I determine aught;

ye be mine lord so dear;
Right as you list, govérneth this mattére."
"Yet will I," quoth this marquis softèly,
"That in thy chamber, I, and thou, and she,
Have a collatïon[4]; and wott'st thou why?
For I will ask if that it her will be
To be my wife, and rule her after me?

[1] Try. [2] Go. [3] Say. [4] Conference, talk.

And all this shall be done in thy presénce ;
I will nought speak out of thine audience."

And in the chamber, while they were about the treaty, the people came into the house without, and wondered to see in how honest and attentive a manner she kept her dear father : but beyond all bounds might Griselda wonder, for she never before saw such a sight. Well she might be astonished to see so great a guest come in that place : she had never been accustomed to such guests ;—

For which she lookèd with full palè face.

But shortly, to follow quickly my subject,

These are the wordès that the marquis said
To this benignè, very,[1] faithful maid.

"Grisild," he said, "ye shall well understand
It liketh to your father and to me
That I you wed ; and eke it may so stand ;
As I suppose, ye will that it so be :
But these demandès ask I first (quoth he)
That since it shall be done in hasty wise
Will ye assent, or ellès you avise ?[2]

I say this, be ye ready with good heart
To all my lust,[3] and that I freely may,
As me best listè, do you laugh or smart,
And never ye to grutch it,[4] night nor day,
And eke when I say Yea, ye say not Nay,
Neither by word nor frowning countenance ?
Swear this, and here I swear our álliance."

Wondering upon this word, quakíng for dread,
She saidè ; "Lord, undigne and únworthy
Am I to thilke honôur that ye me bid,
But as ye will yourself, right so will I :
And *here I swear, that never wittingly*
In work nor thought I will you disobey
For to be dead,[5] though me were loth to dey."[6]

"This is enough, Grisilda mine," quoth he.
And forth go'th he with a full sober cheer
Out at the door, and after that came she ;
And to the people he said in this mannére ;
"This is my wife," quoth he, "that standeth here ;
Honoureth her, and loveth her, I pray,
Whoso me loveth ; there is no more to say."

[1] Truthful. [2] Or, in other words, take time to consider.
[3] Pleasure. [4] Murmur. [5] Even for death. [6] Die.

And for that nothing of her oldè gear
She shouldè bring into his house, he bade
That women should despoilen her right there;
Of which these ladies weren not full glad
To handle her clothès, wherein she was clad.
But nathèless, this maiden, bright of hue,
From foot to head they clothèd have all new.

Her hairès have they comb'd, that lay untress'd
Full rudèly, and with their fingers small
A corowne on her head they have ydress'd,

and decorated her over all with jewels. But of her array why should I make a tale? Hardly the people knew her for her beauty when she was transformed in such rich guise. The marquis espoused her with a ring that he had brought for the purpose, and then set her

Upon a horse snow white, and well ambling;

and without longer delay conveyed her to his palace, amidst joyful people that led, or met her. And then the day is spent in revel, until the sun began to descend. And to

this newè marchioness,
God hath such favour sent her of his grace,
That it ne seemèd not by likeliness
That she was born and fed in rudèness,
As in a cot or in an ox's stall,
But nourished in an emperóres hall.

To every one she waxes so dear, and so deserving of worship, that the people where she was born, and who had known her from her birth, year by year, hardly believed—though they might have sworn it, that she was Janicola's daughter. They thought, in their conjectures, she must be another creature. For though she had been ever virtuous, she increased in such excellence of manner, set in high goodness, she was

So discreet and fair of eloquence,
So bénigne, and so digne[1] of reverence,
And couldè so the people's heart embrace,
That each her loveth that looketh in her face.

Not only of Saluces, in the town,
Publíshèd was the bounty of her name,
But eke beside in many a regïoun;
If one said well, another said the same.
So spreadeth of her high bounty the fame,
That men and women, as well young as old,
Go to Saluce upon her to behold.

[1] Worthy.

Thus Walter, lowly, nay but royally also, having wedded with fortunate honesty, liveth in God's peace, in ease, at home: outwardly he appeared full of grace, and inasmuch as he had perceived how under low degree honest virtue was hid, the people looked upon him as a prudent man: and such men are but seldom seen.

Not only this Grisildis through her wit
Could[1] all the feats of wifely homeliness,
But eke when that the case requirèd it,
The common profit couldè she redress;
There n' as discórd, rancóur, nor heaviness,
In all that land that she ne could appease,
And wisely bring them all in rest and ease.

Though that her husband absent were anon,
If gentlemen or other of her country
Were wroth, she wouldé bringen them at one.[2]
So wise and ripè wordès haddè she,
And judgèment of so great equity,
That she from heaven sent was, as men wend[3]
People to save, and every wrong to mend.

Not long after Grisildis was wedded she bore a daughter. All persons had rather she had given birth to a male child; but the marquis and his people were glad thereof; and

Though a maiden child come all before,
She may unto a knavè[4] child attain
By likelihood, since she is not barrèn.

THE THIRD PART.

It happened that when this child had sucked but a little time, the marquis so longed in his heart to tempt his wife, in order to know her steadfastness, that he could not throw this marvellous desire to test her out of his heart. He thought to affright her—needlessly enough, God knows! He had essayed her enough before, and found her ever good. What need then to tempt her, and to continue tempting her more and more. Though some men praise it for a subtle wit, I say for me that it is an evil to test a wife unnecessarily, and put her in anguish and in dread. The

[1] Knew. [2] Into harmony. [3] Ween'd—believed. [4] Male.

Marquis wrought in this mannére :
He came alone a-night, there as she lay,
With sternè face and with full troubled cheer,
And saidè thus, "Grisild'," quoth he, "that day
That I you took out of your poor array,
And put you in estate of high nobléss,
Ye have not that forgotten, as I guess ;

I say, Grisild', this present dignity,
In which that I have put you as I trow,
Maketh you not forgetful for to be,
That I you took in poor estate full low,
For any weal ye must yourselven know.
Take heed of every word that I you say,
There is no wight that hear'th it but we tway.

Ye wot yourself how that ye comen here
Into this house, it is not long ago ;
And though to me that ye be lief[1] and dear,
Unto my gentles ye be nothing so ;
They say, to them it is great shame and woe
For to be subject, and be in servage
To thee, that born art of a small village.

And namely,[2] since thy daughter was ybore,
These wordès have they spoken doubtèless ;
But I desire, as I have done before,
To live my life with them in rest and peace :
I may not in this case be reckèless :
I must do with thy daughter for the best,
Not as I would, but as my people lest.[3]

And yet, God wot, this is full loth to me ;
But nathèless withouten your weeting[4]
Will I nought do ; but this would I," quoth he,
"That ye to me assent as in this thing ;
Show now your patience in your working,
That ye me hight,[5] and swore, in your village
The day that maked was our marriage."

When she had heard all this, she, not amevèd,[6]
Neither in word, in cheer, or countenance,
(For as it seemèd she was nought aggrievèd)
She saidè, "Lord, all li'th in your pleasance ;
My child and I with heartly obeisance
Be yourès all, and ye may save or spill[7]
Your owen thing : worketh aftér your will.

[1] Agreeable, pleasant. [2] Especially. [3] Please. [4] Knowledge.
[5] Promised. [6] Moved. [7] Destroy.

There may no thing, so God my soulè save,
Liken to you[1] that may displeasen me;
Ne I desirè nothing for to have,
Ne dreadè for to lose, save only ye:
This will is in mine heart, and aye shall be;
No length of time or death may this deface,
Nor changè my courage[2] to other place."

Glad was the marquis of her answer, though he feigned as he were not so.

All dreary was his cheer, and his lookíng

as he left the chamber.

Soon after, going away to the distance of a furlong or two, he privately tells his intent to a man, and sends him to his wife. This man was a kind of sergeant whom he had often found faithful in important things, and such people can well execute what is intrusted to them in bad things: the marquis well knew that he loved and dreaded him. And when the sergeant was acquainted with his

lordès will,
Into the chamber he stalkèd him full still.

"Madame," he said, "ye must forgive it me,
Though I do thing to which I am constrainèd,
Ye be so wise, that full well knowen ye
That lordès hestès may not be yfeignèd,
They may well be bewailèd or complainèd;
But men must needè to their lust[3] obey,
And so will I; there is no more to say.

This child I am commanded for to take."
And spake no more, but out the child he hent[4]
Dispiteously, and 'gan a cheer[5] to make,
As though he would have slain it ere he went.
Grisildis must all suffer, and all consent,
And as a lamb she sitteth meek and still,
And let this cruel sergeant do his will.

Suspicious was the reputation of this man, suspicious his face, suspicious also his words, and the time.

Alas, her daughter that she lovèd so!

she believed he would have slain it at once, but nevertheless she neither wept nor sighed, conforming herself to the marquis's pleasure. But at last she began to speak; and meekly she prayed the sergeant, as he was a worthy gentleman, to let her kiss the child ere it died. Then in her lap

[1] Please you. [2] Inclinations—heart. [3] Desires.
[4] Snatched. [5] Countenance, expression.

this little child she laid
With full sad face, and gan the child to bliss,
And lullèd it, and after 'gan it kiss.

And thus she said in her benignè voice:
"Farewell, my child, I shall thee never see;
But since I have thee markèd with the cross
Of thilkè father, blessèd may thou be,
That for us died upon a cross of tree,
Thy soulè, little child, I him betake,[1]
For this night shall thou dien for my sake."

I trow that to a nurse in such a case it had been hard to have seen this pitiable object. Well might a mother then have cried Alas! but nevertheless, she was so stedfast that she endured all adversity, and to the sergeant said meekly,

"Have here again your little youngè maid.

Go now," quoth she to the sergeant, "and do my lord's bidding. And one thing of your grace I would pray you, unless my lord in the least forbade; bury this little body in some place where neither beasts nor birds may tear it." But he would say no word to that purpose. He took the child, and went upon his way. The sergeant came again unto his lord, and told him shortly and plainly all Grisilde's behaviour and words, point for point, and presented to him his dear daughter. Somewhat this lord exhibits pity in his manner, but he holds still to his purpose,

As lordès do when they will have their will.

And bade the sergeant that he privily
Shouldè this child full softè wind and wrap,
With allè circumstances tenderly,
And carry it in a coffer or in his lap;
But upon pain his head off for to swappe,[2]
That no man shouldè know of this intent,
Ne whence he came, ne whither that he went;

But at Bologn' unto his sister dear,
That thilkè time of Pavia was Countéss,
He should it take, and show her this mattére,
Beseeching her to do her business,
This child to foster in all gentleness;
And whose child that it was, he bade her hide
From every wight, for aught that might betide.

The sergeant goeth, and fulfils this thing. Return we now to the Marquis, who goeth hurriedly to Grisilde, imagining by her

[1] Take or give unto him. [2] Strike.

behaviour or her words he may perceive if she be changed. But—ever the same—he could never find her otherwise than steadfast and kind.

As glad, as humble, as busy in servise,
And eke in love, as she was wont to be,
Was she to him, in every manner wise;
Nor of her daughter not a word spake she.
No accident for no adversity
Was seen in her; ne never her daughter's name
Ne namèd she in earnest or in game.

THE FOURTH PART.

In this estate four years passed before Grisilde was again with child, but as God would, she then bore this Walter a male child

Full gracïous, and fair for to behold.

And people told his father; and not only he but all the country was merry on account of this child, and they thanked and praised God. When it was two years old, and had left its nurse's breast, the marquis on a day, caught yet another desire to tempt his wife,

if he may.
O needless was she tempted in assay.
But wedded men ne knowen no measúre
When that they find a patïent creäture.

"Wife," quoth the marquis, "ye have heard ere this
My people sickly bear'th our marriáge,
And namely[1] since my son yboren is,
Now it is worse than ever in all our age;
The murmur slay'th my heart and my courage,
For to mine earès com'th the voice so smart
That it well nigh destroyèd hath my heart."

Now say they thus: "When Walter is agone
Then shall the blood of Janicle succeed,
And be our lord, for other have we none."
Such wordès saith my people, out of drede;[2]
Well ought I of such murmur taken heed,
For certainly I dreadè such senténce,
Though they not plainly speak in my audïence.[3]

[1] Especially. [2] Doubt. [3] Hearing.

" I wouldè live in peace, if that I might ;
Wherefore I am disposèd utterly,
As I his sister servedè by night,
Right so think I to serve him privily.
Thus warn I you, that ye not suddenly
Out of yourself for no woe should outraie ;[1]
Be patïent, and theréof I you pray."

" I have," quoth she, " said thus, and ever shall say. I will no thing—I certainly never shall will anything—but what may please you.

Nought grieveth me at all,
Though that my daughter and my son be slain
At your commandèment ; *this is to sain,*
I have not had no part of children twain,
But first sicknéss, and after, woe and pain.

Ye be our lord, do'th with your owen thing
Right as you list ; asketh no rede[2] of me ;
For as I left at home all my clothing
When I first came to you, right so," quoth she,
" Left I my will and all my liberty,
And took your clothing ; wherefore I you pray
Do your pleasánce, I will your lust obey.

And certes, if I haddè prescïence
Your will to know, ere ye your lust me told,
I would it do withouten negligence ;
But now I wot[3] your lust, and what ye would,
All your pleasáncè firm and stable I hold ;
For wist I that my death would do you ease,
Right gladly would I dien you to please.

Death may not makè no comparisoun
Unto your love." And when this marquis say[4]
The constance of his wife, he cast adown
His eyen two, and wondreth that she may
In patïence suffér all his array ;
And forth he go'th with dreary countenance,
But to his heart it was full great pleasánce.

This ugly sergeant, in the same manner or worse, if men can any worse devise, that he had caught hold of her daughter, now seized her son that was full of beauty. But ever the same, she was so patient that she made no heaviness of cheer, but kissed her son, and afterwards began to bless him. She only prayed the sergeant

[1] Break, or burst out. [2] Counsel or advice. [3] Know. [4] Saw.

if that he might
Her little son he would in earthè grave,
His tender limbès, delicate to sight,
From foulès[1] and from beastès him to save.

But she might have no answer from him. He went his way as though he knew no compassion ; but then tenderly took the child to Bologna.

This marquis wondereth more and more at her patience; and if he had not truly known beforehand that she perfectly loved her children, he would have believed that for some subtlety, and of malice, or a cruel inclination, she suffered all this with a stedfast visage. But he knew well that next to himself she certainly in every way loved her children best. But now of women I would fain ask if these assays might not suffice? What could a sturdy husband devise more in order to prove her wifehood and her stedfastness? And yet he continues as inflexible as ever. But there are people of such a condition that when they have taken hold of a certain purpose they cannot desist ; but, just as though they were bound to a stake, they abide by it, and slacken nothing : just so this marquis purposes fully still to tempt his wife, as he had at first been disposed. He waiteth [awhile] to see if either by word or countenance she exhibited a change in her inclinations, but never could he find any variation.

She was aye one in heart and in viságe.

And still the older she grew the more faithful and assiduous was she, if that be possible, in her love for him. It seemed that of these two there was but one will ; for as Walter pleased so was also her pleasure.

And God be thankèd, all fell for the best,
She showèd well, for no worldly unrest
A wife, as of herself, no thing ne should
Will, in effect, but as her husband would.

And now the slander of Walter spread wondrously wide; it was said that of a cruel heart and wickedly, because he had wedded a poor woman, he had privily murdered his children. Such murmurs were heard commonly. No wonder : there came no word to the people's ear but that the children were murdered. And they who had loved him so well before were made by this slander to hate him. A murderer's is a hateful name. But nevertheless, neither for earnest, nor sport, would he give up his purpose. His intent was fixed still to tempt his wife.

[1] Birds.

When that his daughter twelve year was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in suchè wise,
Informèd of his will, sent his messáge ;[1]
Commanding him such bullès to devise
As to his cruel purpose may suffíce,
How that the Pope, as for his people's rest,
Bade him to wed another if him lest.[2]

I say, he bade they shouldè counterfeit
The popès bullès, making mentïon
That he hath leave his firstè wife to lete,[3]
As by the Popè's dispensatïon,
To stintè[4] rancour and dissentïon
Betwixt his people and him. Thus said the bull,
The which they have publíshèd at the full.

The rude people believed (and it is no wonder) that things were as they thus seemed. When the tidings reached Grisildis, I deem her heart was full of woe. But stedfast evermore,

Disposèd was this humble creäture,
Th' adversity of fortune all to endure ;

Abiding ever his lust[5] and his pleasánce
To whom that she was given, heart and all ;

as though they were to her, in this world, an ample sufficiency. But to tell my story shortly, the marquis hath written a special letter, showing his intent, and secretly sent it to Bologna to the Earl of Pavia, who had married his sister, praying him to bring home his two children openly, and in honourable estate. One thing also he prayed earnestly, that, though men might inquire, he should tell to no one whose children they were,

But say the maiden should yweddèd be
Unto the Marquis of Saluce anon ;
And as this earl was prayèd, so did he ;
For at day set, he on his way is gone
Towàrd Sáluce, and lordès many one
In rich array, this maiden for to guide,
Her youngè brother riding by her side.

Arrayèd was to-ward her marrïage
This freshè maid, all full of gemmès clear ;
Her brother, which that seven years was of age,
Arrayèd eke full fresh in his mannére.
And thus in great nobléss, and with glad cheer,
To-wàrd Saluces shaping their journáy
From day to day they riden in their way.

[1] Messenger. [2] Please. [3] Put away. [4] Stay. [5] Desire.

THE FIFTH PART.

THE loving innocent mother has suffered the cruellest trials. Now the wife is to be harrowed. Can she suffer uncomplainingly the greatest indignity to herself, as well as injury to her children? Yes. Her love is above all.

Among all this, after his wicked uságe,
This marquis yet his wife to tempten more
To the utterest proof of her courage
Fully to have experience and lore,
If that she were as steadfast as before;
He on a day in open audience
Full boisterously hath said her this sentence:

"Certes, Grisild', I had enough pleasance
To have you to my wife for your goodness,
And for your truth and for your obeisance;[1]
Not for your lin'age, ne for your richéss;
But now know I in very soothfastness
That in great lordship, if I well advise,
There is great servitude in sundry wise.

I may not do, as every ploughman may:
My people me constraineth for to take
Another wife, and crien day by day;
And eke the Popè, rancour for to slake,
Consenteth it, that dare I undertake:
And truëly, thus much I will you say,
My newè wife is coming by the way.

Be strong of heart, and void anon her place!
And thilkè dower that ye broughten me,
Take it again; I grant it of my grace.
Returneth to your father's house (quoth he),
No man may always have prosperity.
With even heart I rede[2] you to endure
The stroke of Fortune or of adventure."

And she, again, answér'd in patïence:
"My lord," quoth she, "I wot and wist[3] alway.
How that betwixen your magnificence
And my povért', no wight ne can nor may
Maken comparison: it is no nay:
I held me never digne[4] in no mannére
To be your wife, nor yet your chamberer.

[1] Obedience. [2] Advise. [3] I know, and knew. [4] Worthy.

And in this house there ye me lady made
(The highè God take I for my witnéss,
And all so wisely he my soulè glade[1])
I never held me lady or mistréss
But humble servant to your worthiness;
And ever shall, while that my life may 'dure,
Aboven every worldly creäture.

That ye so long of your benignity
Have holden me in honour and nobléy,[2]
Whereas I was not worthy for to be,
That thank I God and you, to whom I pray
Foryield[3] it you; there is no more to say:
Unto my father gladly will I wend,
And with him dwell unto my livès end.

There I was fostered as a child full small;
Till I be dead, my life there will I lead;
A widow clean in body, heart, and all:
For since I gave to you my 'maidenhede,'
And am your truë wife, it is no drede,
God shieldè such a lordès wife to take[4]
Another man to husband or to make.[5]

And of your newè wife, God of his grace
So grant you wealè and prosperity,
For I will gladly yielden her my place
In which that I was blissful wont to be:
For since it liketh you, my lord (quoth she),
That whilom weren all my heartès rest,
That I shall go, I will go when you lest.

But there as ye me proffer such dowaire,
As I first brought, it is well in my mind,
It were my wretchèd clothès, nothing fair,
The which to me were hard now for to find.
O goodè God! how gentle and how kind
Ye seemèd by your speech and your visage
The day that makèd was our marriage!

But sooth is said, algate[6] I find it true,
For in effect it provèd is on me,
Love is not old, as when that it is new;
But certes, lord, for none adversity,
To dien in this case, it shall not be
That ever in word or work I shall repent
That I you gave my heart in whole intent.

[1] Comfort. [2] Nobleness. [3] Repay.
[4] To take—against taking [5] Mate [6] Always.

My lord, ye wot that in my father's place,
Ye did me strip out of my poorè weed,
And richèly me cladden of your grace;
To you brought I nought ellès out of drede
But faith, and nakedness, and maidenhede;
And here again my clothing I restore,
And eke my wedding ring, for evermore.

The remnant of your jewels ready be
Within your chamber, I dare safely sain.
Naked out of my father's house (quoth she)
I came, and naked must I turn again.
All your pleasancè would I fulfil fain,
But yet I hope, it be not your intent
That I smockléss out of your palace went.

. . . . .

I pray you—

Let me not like a worm go by the way:
Remember you, mine owen lord so dear,
I was your wife, though I unworthy were.

. . . . .

Vouchsafe this to me, and here I take my leave of you, mine own lord, lest I grieve you."

"The smock," quoth he, "that thou hast on thy back,
Let it be still, and bear it forth with thee."

But it was with difficulty he spoke; he was so full of pity and sorrow that he was compelled to go away. Then

Before the folk herselven strippeth she,
And in her smock, with head and foot all bare,
Towàrd her father's house forth is she fare.

The folk her follow weeping in her way,
And Fortune aye they cursen as they gone;[1]
But she from weeping kept her eyen dry,
Ne in this timè word ne spake she none.
Her father, that this tiding heard anon,
Curseth the day and timè that Natúre
Shaped him to be a living creäture.

No doubt, this poor old man had ever been suspicious concerning her marriage. From the first he had believed that when the lord had satisfied his inclinations, he would think it a disparagement to his estate to have alighted so low, and therefore put her away as soon as he could. Towards his daughter he goes hastily, for he knew by the noise of the people that she was coming, and, weeping sorrowfully, with

[1] Go, walk.

her old coat tries to cover her; but it would not meet about her body, for the cloth was rude, and older by many a day than at the time of her marriage.

Thus with her father, for a certain space,
Dwelleth this flower of wifely patience,
That neither by her words nor by her face,
Before the folk, nor eke[1] in their absence,
Ne showèd she that her was done offence,
Nor of her high estate no rémembrance
Ne haddè she as by her countenance.

No wonder is, for in her great estate,
Her ghost[2] was ever in plain[3] humility;
No tender mouth, no heartè delicate,
No pomp, ne no semblánce of royalty,
But full of patïent benignity,
Discreet, and pridèless, aye honourable,
And to her husband ever meek and stable.

Men speak of Job, and most for his humbléss,
As clerkès, when them lust, can well indite,
Namely[4] of men, but as in soothfastness,
Though clerkès praisen women but a lite,[5]
There can no man in humbless him acquit
As woman can, ne can be half so true
As women be,—but[6] it be fall'n of new.

THE SIXTH PART.

FROM Bologna the Earl of Pavia is come; and the fame thereof springs up to rich and poor, and it also reaches the ears of the people generally that he brings with him a new marchioness in such pomp and richness, that never before did the eye of man see so noble an array in all West Lombardy. The marquis, who had shaped and knew all this before the earl came, sent a message for the poor simple Grisildis.

And she with humble heart and glad viságe,
Not with no swollen thought in her courage,
Came at his hest,[7] and on her knees her set,
And reverently and wifely she him gret.[8]

"Grisilde," quoth he, "it is my entire will that this maiden, who is to be wedded to me, shall be received to-morrow in as

[1] Also. [2] Spirit. [3] Full. [4] Especially.
[5] Little. [6] Save, except. [7] Bidding. [8] Greeted.

royal a manner as it is possible in my house she can be. And also that every one, according to his rank, shall have his estate properly observed, in seating, serving, and in as highly pleasing him as I can devise. I have certainly no woman who is able to array the chambers in due order after my pleasure, and therefore I would wish that thine were all such governance. Thou knowest of old all that is agreeable to me. And though thine array be bad, and evil to look at,

Do thou thy devoir at the leastè way."

" Not only, lord, that I am glad (quoth she)
To do your lust,[1] but I desire alsó
You for to serve and please in my degree,
Withouten fainting, and shall evermo' :
Ne never for no weal, ne for no woe,
Ne shall the ghost[2] within my heartè stent,[3]
To love you best with all my true intent."

And with that word she 'gan the house to dight,
And tables for to set, and beddès make,
And painèd her to do all that she might ;
Praying the chamberers for Goddès sake
To hasten them, and fastè sweep and shake ;
And she, the most servíceable of all,
Hath every chamber arrayèd, and his hall.

About nine of the clock the earl alighted, with these two noble children. The people ran to see the sight of their rich array. And then at first amongst them it was said that Walter was no fool ; though it pleased him to change his wife, he changed for the best.

For she is fairer, as they deemen all
Than is Grisild', and more tendér of age,
And fairer fruit between them shouldè fall
And more pleasánt, for her high lineáge :
Her brother eke[4] so fair was of viságe,
That them to see the people caught pleasánce,
Commending now the marquis' governance.

O stormy people, unsad,[5] and ever untrue,
And indiscreet, and changing as a fane,
Delighting ever in rumble[6] that is new,
For like the moon aye waxen ye and wane :
Aye full of clapping, dear enough a jane,[7]
Your doom is false, your constance evil preveth,[8]
A full great fool is he that on you 'lieveth.

[1] Pleasure. [2] Spirit. [3] Stop, cease. [4] Also. [5] Unstable.
[6] Rumour. [7] A small Genoese coin. [8] Proveth.

Thus said grave persons
in that city,
When that the people gazèd up and down,
For they were glad, right for the novelty,
To have a newè lady of their town.

I make now no further mention of this, but will address myself again to Grisilde, and speak of her business and constancy. And thoroughly busy she was in every thing that appertained to the feast. Nothing abashed on account of her dress, though it was rude, and somewhat torn, with glad cheer she goes with other folk to the gate to greet the marchioness, and afterwards proceeds with her duties.

With so glad cheer his guestès she receiveth,
And conningly,[1] every in his degree,
That no defaultè no man apperceiveth,
But aye they wondèren what she mightè be
That in so poor array was for to see,
And couldè such honóur and reverence;
And worthily they praisen her prudénce.

In all this meanè whilè she ne stent,[2]
This maid and eke her brother, to commend
With all her heart in full buxóm[3] intent,
So well that no man could her praise amend;
But at the last when that these lordès wend[4]
To sitten down to meat, he 'gan to call
Grisild', as she was busy in his hall.

"Grisild', (quoth he, as it were in his play)
How liketh thee my wife and her beauty?"
"Right well, my lord, (quoth she) for in good fay
A fairer saw I never none than she;
I pray to God give her prosperity,
And so I hope that he will to you send
Pleasánce enough unto your lívès end.

One thing beseech I you, and warn alsó,
That ye ne prickè with no tórmenting
This tender maiden, as ye have done mo,[5]
For she is fostered in her nourishing
More tenderly, and to my súpposing
She couldè not adversity endure,
As could a poorè foster'd creäture."

And when this Walter saw her patïence,
Her gladdè cheer, and no malíce at all,
And he so oft had done to her offence,
And she aye sad[6] and constant as a wall,
Continuing ever her innocence over all;

[1] Knowingly, appreciatingly. [2] Ceased. [3] Obedient, dutiful.
[4] Went. [5] More. [6] Stedfast, firm.

This sturdy marquis 'gan his heart address
To rue upon her wifely stedfastness.

" This is enough, Grisilda mine (quoth he),
Be now no more aghast, or evil apaid,[1]
I have thy faith and thy benignity,
As well as ever woman was, assay'd,
In great estate, and poorèly arrayed.
Now know I, dearè wife, thy stedfastness ;"
And her in armès took, and 'gan to kess.[2]

And she for wonder took of it no keep :
She heardè not what thing he to her said ;
She fared as she had start out of a sleep,
Till she out of her mazedness abraid.[3]
" Grisild' (quoth he), by God that for us dey'd,
Thou art my wife ; none other I ne have ;
Ne never had, as God my soulè save.

This is my daughter which thou hast supposed
To be my wife ; that other faithfully
Shall be mine heir, as I have aye purpósed ;
Thou bare them in thy body truëly ;
At Bologn' have I kept them privily :
Take them again, for now may'st thou not say,
That thou hast lorn[4] none of thy children tway.

And folk that otherwise have said of me,
I warn them well that I have done this deed
For no malíce nor for no cruelty,
But for t' assay in thee thy womanhede,
And not to slay my children (God forbede !),
But for to keep them privily and still
Till I thy purpose knew, and all thy will."

When she this heard, a-swoonè down she falleth
For piteous joy ; and aftér her swooníng,
She both her youngè children to her calleth,
And in her armès, piteously weepíng,
Embraceth them, and tenderly kissíng
Full like a mother, with her saltè tears
She bathèd both their visage and their ears.

O, what a piteous thing it was to see
Her swooning, and her humble voice to hear !
" *Grand mercy*, lord ! God thank it you (quoth she),
That ye have savèd me my children dear :
Now reck I never to be dead right here,
Since I stand in your love and in your grace,
No force of[5] déath, nor when my spirit pace.[6]

[1] Pleased. [2] Kiss. [3] Started, recovered. [4] Lost.
[5] No matter for, I care not for. [6] Pass.

O tender, dearè, youngè children mine!
Your woful mother weenèd[1] stedfastly
That cruel houndès or some foul vermíne
Had eaten you; but God of his mercý
And your benignè father tenderly
Hath done you keep[2]: " and in that samè stound[3]
All suddenly she swappèd[4] down to ground.

And in her swoon so sadly holdeth she
Her children two, when she 'gan them embrace,
That with great sleight and great difficulty,
The children from her arm they 'gan arrace.[5]
O! many a tear, on many a piteous face,
Down ran of them that stooden her beside;
Unneth[6] about her mightè they abide.

Walter her gladdeth, and her sorrow slaketh,
She riseth up abashèd from her trance,
And every wight her[7] joy and feastè maketh,
Till she hath caught again her coúntenance.
Walter her doth so faithfully pleasánce,
That it was dainty for to see the cheer
Betwixt them two now they been met in fere.[8]

These ladies, when that they their timè say,[9]
Have taken her, and into chamber gone,
And strippen her out of her rude array,
And in a cloth of gold that brightè shone,
With a corowne of many a richè stone
Upon her head, they into hall her brought,
And there she was honóurèd as she ought.

Thus hath this piteous day a blissful end;
For every man and woman doth his might,
This day in mirth and revel to dispend;
Till on the welkin shone the starrès bright;
For more solémn in every mannès sight
This feastè was, and greater of costáge,
Than was the revel of their marrïage.

Full many a year, in high prosperity, and in rest, and in concord, lived these two. And, richly, the marquis married his daughter to a lord, one of the worthiest of all Italy. And in rest and peace, he kept in his court his wife's father, until the soul crept out of his body. In rest and in peace, too, his son succeeds in his heritage, after his father's day [of rule], and was fortunate also in his marriage, although he did not put his wife in great trials;

[1] Believed. [2] Caused you to be preserved. [3] Moment. [4] Fell.
[5] Take away. [6] Hardly. [7] To her. [8] In union. [9] Saw.

This world is not so strong, it is no Nay
As it hath been in oldè timès yore;

hearken, therefore, what my author saith. This story is told, not because wives should follow Grisilde in humility; for though they would desire to do so, they would find it impossible, but because every one, according to his position,

Should be constant in adversity
As was Grisilde.

Therefore Petrarch writeth in a lofty style this story. And since a woman was so patient unto a mortal man, much more ought we to receive in cheerfulness what God sends us; . . . .

He proveth folk all day, it is no dread.

REMARKS ON THE CLERK'S TALE.

THERE is no more difficult or delicate problem in criticism—and we speak not technically, but of that general criticism which all readers more or less exercise—than to have neither too much nor too little faith in an author: give yourself up to him at once unreservedly, and you cease in a great measure to exercise an independent judgment; scan every movement and thought, and you cease to enjoy, almost to learn. Yet it is not, we venture to think, by any endeavour to hit a presumed medium between these two courses that the problem is to be solved. Two such opposite sets of mental agencies are thus brought into play at the same time, that if they are equally efficient the result is a kind of paralysis of both. They must, therefore, each work alone in order to be of much value. And why not? Is it, for instance, a poet of the loftiest pretensions who comes before us? we cannot make too sure of the genuineness and value of his credentials; but, once satisfied, let him for evermore be an honoured guest among us. Our wisdom will be thenceforward best shown in listening to his wisdom. The great poet teaches; he does not dispute

And there is for every man, if he would but seek it, a kind of sacred pool of Bethesda, in which his spirit might wash away the impurities and incrustations that it must contract in the miry and hard ways of the world; that pool is the depths of his own heart; and the poet is the angel who ever waiteth to stir

it. Those who have read the Clerk's Tale[1] in the right spirit will not require to see with their own eyes the sudden flashing of the intolerable radiance, or to hear with their own ears, the beating of the strange wings, in order to satisfy themselves of the truth and character of *Chaucer's* ministrations. They will be content to feel what he has made them feel—the unapproachable beauty and irresistible power of Love, who when most trampled upon is then most truly preparing to achieve mightier conquests than ambition ever dreamt of; their first impulse will not be to attempt to measure the poet's intellectual altitude, still less to fasten instantly upon as a fault what they have happened not to appreciate or understand; it will be to consider how they may themselves do something more than they have ever done before to realise the bidding of the Divine Teacher of the Mount, whose laws here become persons, and move about among us, like their Giver, exemplifying in a human shape what they would make of humanity.

It is in such a spirit we would ourselves desire to leave this tale to its own merits, and not attempt what must be, under ordinary circumstances, an act of presumption, to enforce or to explain its lessons. But it would be idle to deny that there is a class of readers who have more taste than self-confidence, more capacity for enjoyment than ability to defend what they enjoy; and who are therefore apt to be unjust to their author for no better reason than that others are so;—persons who, wanting their qualifications to perceive excellences, are therefore only the more eager to attack what seem to them defects. Grisilde, with such persons, is not *natural*. No mother, they say, could see her children sacrificed as she does—no wife could see another brought into her place, and be herself required to assist in the preparations for the new comer, without turning against the foot that crushes her: whereas Grisilde, on the contrary, when the second blow is struck, and her son taken away as the daughter had been before, says to the cruel destroyer—

> not grieveth me at all
> Though that my daughter and my son be slain
> At your commandèment.

True, she does say so, for Grisilde in the height of her sublime

[1] In the previous pages, 129–130, we have spoken at length of the origin of this tale; we need, therefore, only repeat here that Chaucer derived its subject from Boccaccio, through the medium of Petrarch, who is supposed to have related it by word of mouth to Chaucer, during one of the English poet's visits to Italy. See Petrarch's Latin and Boccaccio's Italian versions in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues,' pp. 149–176; also pp. 525 and 549 for other versions.

devotion to what she believes to be her duty to her liege lord, and in fulfilment of the oath she took to obey him in all things, desires to avert from her lord even the reflection of her sorrows: but what she really suffers we feel almost too acutely. Chaucer's wonderful art, while apparently making little or no attempt to show the state of Grisilde's feelings, is in truth constantly revealing depth beneath depth of the heart of this divine woman. So, mark the revulsion that immediately follows this overstraining of the powers of nature—how the very brain seems to reel, and grow confused in the agony of the struggle between all kinds of conflicting thoughts and passions, even whilst the hands still keep their firm hold of the rock of duty to which Grisilde clings as her only safeguard.

not grieveth me at all
Though that my daughter and my son be slain
At your commandèment; *that is to sain*
I have not had no part of children twain,
But first sicknéss, and after woe and pain.

Ye be my lord, doeth with your owen thing
Right as you lest,[1] *asketh no rede*[2] *of me;*
For as I left at home all my clothing,
When I came first to you, right so (quoth she)
Left I my will, and all my liberty,
And took your clothing; therefore I you pray
Do your pleasánce, I will your lust[3] obey.

Again, take another passage:—

And of your newè wife, God of his grace
So grant you wealè and prosperity,
For I will gladly yielden her my place
In which that I was blissful wont to be:
For since it liketh you, my lord (quoth she),
That whilom weren all my heartès rest,
That I shall go, I will go when you lest.

But there as ye me proffer such dowaíre,
As I first brought, it is well in my mind,
It were my wretchèd clothès, nothing fair,
The which to me were hard now for to find,
O goodè God! how gentle and how kind
Ye seemèd by your speech, and your viságe,
The day that makèd was our marríage!

In these words the readers of the fourteenth century saw at once the whole nature of Grisilde's social relations with her lord; for they were themselves living under the same, though

[1] Please. [2] Advice. [3] Pleasure.

a greatly modified, system. It is not so with us; and we must, therefore, seek explanations upon these matters if we are not willing to take the poet upon trust. To begin then. The marquis is, as we are constantly told in order to impress its consequences upon us, the *lord* of Grisilde—that is to say, he is absolute master of her life, liberty, and honour, by the recognised laws of the feudal system. But that is not all. The period in question was not only the period of the strictest despotism, but of the warmest loyalty also; and, indeed, it was precisely because so much was done to gild the chain, until it became a mark of honour rather than of humiliation to wear it, that the system lasted so long as it did, and developed so much of goodness. A generous and chivalrous spirit would then devote himself almost as unreservedly to the service of his earthly as of his heavenly Lord. Not content with mere obedience, he sought to anticipate his every wish. So it is with Grisilde and her father, when the marriage is proposed. It would be a mistake to think that any choice was really offered to them, of acceptance or denial; the marquis, of his courtesy, puts it in that way; but though the old man, as we subsequently learn, had been

> ever in suspect of their marriage,

he could only say what he did, "Lord, my will is as ye will," etc. As to Grisilde, she is not even directly asked to consent to the union; she is simply desired to understand that her father and her feudal lord have been pleased to determine that the union shall take place; and what she is asked is this—and we beg especial attention to the words—

> Be ye ready with good heart
> To all my lust,[1] and that I freely may
> As me best thinketh, do you laugh or smart,
> And never ye to grutchen night nor day,
> And eke when I say Yea, ye say not Nay,
> Neither by word nor frowning countenance?
> Swear this, and here I swear our álliance.

Startling as all this may sound now, it would not have done so at the time, for it meant little more than that the subject should carry her old allegiance into her new position; and not presume upon it to interfere with her lord's will or wish—not become less bound to obey him in any conceivable extremity. And whilst Grisilde must accept the hand offered—as it is offered, the act itself is of such princely generosity and trustfulness, and proceeds from so loved as well as revered a

[1] Pleasure.

personage (as Walter is described to have been), that her heart responds in willing gratitude to the words that other and more primary influences compel her to speak,

> —— *Here I swear,—that never willingly*
> *In work nor thought I will you disobey*:

She did not conceive—no one could have conceived—the awful consequences to which this solemn engagement bound her, in addition to and beyond all her ordinary ties ; but, being bound, she determines with the whole force of her steady and resolute, though most gentle spirit, to fulfil her obligations. And thus we have before us two phases of the character of Grisilde—a boundless notion of feudal loyalty, and a heartfelt sense of an unredeemable debt of gratitude to the marquis for seeking her in and lifting her out of her lowly condition ; each phase enhancing the other a thousand fold ; and both solemnly confirmed by the oath administered to Grisilde previous to the marriage. Surely here are influences enough to explain all her self-sacrifices, and make them *natural* enough, in the commonest sense of the word, if we only find that the poet's machinery for setting his story in motion (the peculiar character of the marquis) is adequate, and that Grisilde herself has *power* to go through them, which certainly neither her loyalty, nor her gratitude, nor her oath, nor her wedded love, could of themselves give her.

The character of the marquis may be looked upon as an illustration of the fantastic appetites that uncontrolled will is apt to engender in the hearts of the best of men. All is well both within and without his dominions. He is touched neither by "malice domestic" nor "foreign levy;" his subjects love him, and are in perfect contentment with his government. Nowhere is there stirring even the faintest breath of opposition to ruffle and give a bracing tendency to the atmosphere of his mind. The very excess and perfection of his power makes him feel less powerful by giving him no opportunity of testing it. There is nothing for him to do that seems to him worth doing. Wanting healthy, the mind seeks unhealthy action. For a time, however, and whilst the buoyancy of youth partially counteracted the growing morbidness created by his position, the marquis found a vent for his wasting energies in the sports of the field, and satisfied his eternal craving for some present and passing pleasure by hawking and hunting on every side. And before these had quite failed to satisfy him, he was interrupted in their enjoyment by the appeal of his subjects, and by the new train of thought and feeling that his consequent marriage created. But after a while the old craving returns with tenfold

force ; until at last the ever restless mind, in its wanderings after fresh excitement, lights suddenly upon the idea of tempting his wife. And there are thoughts that, once as it were glanced at, become as full of fascination and danger as the eye of the glittering and deadly snake : this is so to the marquis. Grisilde's whole character is of so lofty a nature as to render it doubtful whether she *could* be forced, by any amount of adversity that might be inflicted upon her, to break her sworn and unconditional allegiance to him, or to be unfaithful to the higher principles that actuate her being. What an opportunity for a man satiated with the eternal reflection of his own will in the mirror of the public mind ! There is a career open to him in which there is really a possibility of failure ! It is true, he cannot move a step in it without inflicting the extremest anguish upon his beloved wife ; but he has not been much accustomed to weigh very nicely the exact amount or nature of the emotions of others ; and though his real affection for her necessarily involves some sympathy, he passes off all unpleasant and impeding considerations by assuring himself that none of the evils he may inflict will be real or at least irremediable. Perhaps, too, he unconsciously and most incorrectly attributes to her a share in his own sensations and views, and therefore not only excuses himself by reflecting on the bliss it will be in his power to confer on her in the end, when she is informed as to the truth, but half fancies she may be content to exchange a comparatively dull state of existence for one where the blackest shadows and brightest sunshine shall in succession, cross the path. He determines upon the dangerous and cruel, but most attractive experiment. Poor Grisilde's trials begin. And she passes through them triumphantly. But how ? Whence, and of what nature is the power that can support her in all her anguish ? The power is from God, a part of His own essence, and its name is Love. Love, whose law it is that the more injury it receives the more should it exhibit its true character, which is still Love, to the injurer ; and whose faith it is that thus alone can evil be stopped at its source instead of being allowed to go on—acting, and, on the plea of resentment, re-acting each upon each continually. Is not this a faith for a martyrdom ? They are an "army" the men and women who have gone to the stake in order to maintain the right of reading differently from their fellows the same common Bible ; nay, sometimes, we fear, for little more than the mere right of sending others to that same stake ; and yet there are those who doubt the existence of the Martyrs of Love.

Grisilde is such a martyr. Her story is but the embodiment

of the spirit which eighteen hundred years ago shone through the words and acts of Him who died upon the cross, saying "Forgive them; they know not what they do:" and which for eighteen hundred, or eighteen times eighteen hundred years to come, can alone, by its diffusion through all hearts and institutions, redeem or preserve the world from the thousand ills it has been heir to. Upon the altar of Love the poem of the Clerk's Tale remains through all time an offering of unapproachable value.

THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

AT Sarra, in the land of Tartary, there dwelt a king who warred with Russia, through which many a doughty man died. This noble king was called Cambuscan, who in his time was so greatly renowned that there was nowhere—in no region—

> So excellent a lord in allè thing,
> Him lackèd nought that 'longed to a king;

to speak of him as of the class of which that he was born. He kept the faith to which he had pledged himself; he was also rich, hardy, and wise; full of pity, just, and ever the same;

> Sooth[1], of his word, benign, and honouráble,
> Of his courage as any centre stable,
> Young, fresh, and strong,

and as desirous of honour in arms as any bachelor of his household.

> A fairè persón he was and fortunáte,
> And kept so well his ro-y-ál estate,
> That there was nowhere such a royal man.
> This noble king, this Tartar, Cambuscan,
> Haddè two sons by Elcheta his wife,

of which the eldest was called Algarsife, and the other Camballo.

> A daughter had this worthy king alsó,
> That youngest was, and hightè Canacè:
> But for to tellen you all her beauty
> It li'th not on my tongue, ne my conníng;
> I dare not undertake so high a thing:
> Mine English eke is insufficïent.

It must be an excellent rhetorician that could find colours sufficient for that art, if he should in any way attempt to describe her:

> I am not such, I must speak as I can.
> And so befell it that this Cambuscan

[1] True.

Hath twenty winters borne his diadem ;
As he was wont from year to year, I deem,

he caused the feast of his nativity to be proclaimed throughout the city of Sarra, on the last Ides of March, as it fell according to the year.[1]

Phœbus, the sun, full jolly was and clear,
For he was nigh his exaltatïon
In Martès face, and in his mansïon
In Arïes, the choleric hot sign.
Full lusty was the weather, and benign,
For which the fowls against the sunnè sheen
(What for the season and the youngè green)
Full loudè sung in their affectïons :
Them seemed had getten them protectïons
Against the sword of winter keen and cold.
This Cambuscan, of which I have you told,
In royal vesture sitting on his dais
With diadem, full high in his palàce ;

and held his feast so rich, and so solemn, that there was none in the world like it.

Of which, if I shall tellen all th' array,
Then would it occupy a summer's day ;
And eke it needeth not for to devise
At every course the order and servíse.

I will not tell of their strange dishes, nor of their swans, nor their young herons. In that land also, as old knights tell, there is some meat held as a dainty that in this land men care little for. No man may report all.

I will not tarrien you, for it is prime ;
And, for it is no fruit, but loss of time ;

I will betake me unto my purpose.

And it so befell that, after the third course, while the king sat in all his nobleness,

Hearkening his ministrels their thingès play
Before him at the board deliciously ;
In at the hallè door all suddenly
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
And in his hand a broad mirrour of glass ;

[1] The eight days in each month known among the Romans as the Ides, were reckoned backwards, from the 13th, except in the months of March, May, July, and October, when the reckoning was from the 15th; the 15th of March therefore was Cambuscan's birth-day.

Upon his thumb he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a naked sword hanging;
And up he rideth to the highè board.
In all the hall ne was there spoke a word
For marvel of this knight; him to behold
Full busily they waiten, young and old.
This strangè knight, that came thus suddenly,
All armèd save his head full richèly,
Saluteth king and queen, and lordès all,
By order as they satten in the hall,
With so high reverence and observance,
As well in speech as in his countenance,
That Gawain with his oldè courtesy,
Though he were come again out of Faery,
Ne could him not amendè with no word.
And after this, before the highè board,
He with a manly voice said this message
After the formè used in his language,
Withouten vice of syllable or letter.
And for his talè shouldè seem the better,
Accordant to his wordès was his cheer,

as the art of speech teaches to those who learn it. Albeit that I cannot express his lofty manner,

Nor cannot climben o'er so high a stile;

yet this I say, that to a common understanding, all that ever he meant amounteth to thus much,

If it so be that I have it in mind:
He said, "The king of Araby and Inde,
My liegè lord, on this solemnè day
Saluteth you as he best can or may,
And sendeth you, in honour of your feast,
By me, that am ready at all his hest,
This steed of brass, that easily and well
Can in the space of one day naturèl
(This is to say, in four-and-twenty hours)
Where so you lust, in drought or ellès showers,
Bearen your body into every place
To which your heartè willeth for to pace,

through foul or fair, and notwithstanding any error or defect on your part;

Or if you lust to flee as high in th' air
As doth an eagle, when him list to soar,
This samè steed shall bear you evermore,
Withouten harm, till ye be there you lest
(Though that ye sleepen on his back or rest),

and turn again, with the turning of a pin. He that wrought it was capable of many a subtle contrivance.

He waited many a constellatïon,
Ere he had done this operatïon,[1]
And knew full many a seal and many a bond.
This mirror eke that I have in mine hond
Hath such a might, that men may in it see
When there shall fall any adversity
Unto your regne,[2] or to yourself also
And openly who is your friend or foe.
And over all this, if any lady bright
Hath set her heart on any manner wight,
If he be false, she shall his treason see,
His newè love, and his subtilety,
So openly that there shall nothing hide.
Wherefore against this lusty summer tide,
This mirror and this ring, that ye may see,
He hath sent to my Lady Canace,
Your excellentè daughter that is here.
The virtue of this ring, if ye will hear,
Is this, that whoso lust it for to wear
Upon her thumb, or in her purse to bear,
There is no fowl[3] that fleëth under heaven

that she shall not well understand his speech, and know his meaning openly and plain, and answer him in his own language.

And every grass that groweth upon root

she shall also know, and whom it will heal,

All be his woundès ne'er so deep and wide.
This naked sword, that hangeth by my side,
Such virtue hath, that what man that it smite,
Throughout his armour it will carve and bite,
Were it as thick as is a branchèd oak ;
And what man is ywounded with the stroke
Shall ne'er be whole, till that you lust, of grace,
To stroke him

with the flat part where he is hurt ; this is to say, ye must with the flat of the sword

Stroake him in the wound, and it will close.

This is the very truth without deceit :

It faileth not while it is in your hold."
And when this knight thus had his talè told,

[1] Astrology. [2] Realm. [3] Bird.

He rode out of the hall, and down he 'light.
His steedè, which that shone as sunnè bright,
Stood in the court as still as any stone.
This knight is to his chamber led anon,
And is unarmèd and to meat yset.

These presents are fetched away in a rich manner, that is to say, the mirror and the sword, which are borne anon into the high tower by certain officers specially appointed. And the ring is borne, solemnly, to Canace, as she sat at the board. But certainly, without fable, as to the horse of brass, it may not be removed. It stands as it were glued to the ground. No man may drive it out of the place by such engines as the windlass or pulley, and for this reason, they know not the craft. And therefore they have left it in the place, until the Knight hath taught them the manner of removing him, as ye shall afterwards hear.

Great was the press that swarmèd to and fro,
To gauren[1] on this horse that standeth so;
For it so high was, and so broad and long,
So well proportionèd for to be strong,
Right as it were a steed of Lombardy;—
Thereto so horsely and so quick of eye
As it a gentle Polish courser were;
For certes from his tail unto his ear
Nature nor Art ne could him not amend
In no degree, as all the people ween'd.
But evermore their mostè wonder was
How that it couldè go, and was of brass:
It was of Faërie, as the people seem'd.
Diversè people diversely they deem'd:
As many heads as many wittès be.

They murmured as doth a swarm of bees. They made reasons after their fantasies,

Rehearsing of the oldè poetries,
And said it was ylike the Pegasee,
The horse that haddè wingès for to flee.

Or else it was the horse of Sinon, the Greek, that brought Troy to destruction, as men may read in the old Gestes.

"My heart (quoth one) is evermore in drede;
I trow some men of armès be therein,
That shapen them this city for to win:
It were right good that all such thing were know."
Another rownèd[2] to his fellow low,

[1] Gaze. [2] Whispered.

And said, "It lieth, for it is rather like
An ápparencè made by some magíc,
As jugglers playen at these feastès great."

Thus they jangle and discuss of sundry doubts: judging, as ignorant people commonly do, of things made with greater subtlety than they in their ignorance can comprehend:—

They deemen gladly to the badder end.
And some of them wondéred on the mirrór
That born was up into the master tower,
How men might in it suchè thingès see.
Another answer'd and said, "It might well be
Naturally by compositïons
Of angles, and of high reflectïons;"
And saidè that in Rome was such a one.
They speak of Alhazen and Vitellon
And Aristotle, that written in their lives
Of quaintè mirrors and of próspectives,[1]
As knowen they that have their bookès heard.
And other folk have wond'red on the sword
That wouldè passè throughout every thing;
And fell in speech of Telephus the king,
And of Achilles for his quaintè spear,

for he both could heal and hurt with it, in the very same manner as men may with the sword of which ye have yourselves just now heard.

They speak of sundry modes of hardening of metal; and they speak also of medicines, and of how and when it should be hardened, all of which is unknown to me.

Then speaken they of Canaceë's ring,
And saiden all that such a wondrous thing
Of craft of ringès heard they never none,
Save that he, Moses, and King Solomon,
Hadden a name of conning[2] in such art.
Thus say the people: and drawen them apart.
But nathèless some saiden that it was
Wondrous to make of fernè-ashes glass,
And yet is glass nought like ashés of fern;

but inasmuch as they had known it so before.

Therefore ceaseth their jangling and their wonder.
And sorè wond'ren some on cause of thunder,
On ebb, and flood, on gossamer, and on mist,

and on all things, until the cause be known.

Thus janglen they, and deemen and devise,
Till that the king 'gan from his board arise.

[1] Telescopes. [2] Knowledge or skill.

Phœbus hath left the angle meridionál,
And yet ascending was the beast royál,
The gentle Lion, with his Aldrian,
When that this Tartar King, this Cambuscan,
Rose from his board, there as he sat full high.
Before him go'th full loudè minstrelsy,

until he came to his chamber of State, where they sound

divers instruments,
That is ylike a heaven for to hear.
Now dancen lusty Venus' children dear,
For in the Fish[1] their lady sat full high,
And looketh on them with a friendly eye.
This noble king is set upon his throne,
This strangè knight is fetch'd to him full soon,
And in the dance he 'gan with Canace.
Here is the revel and the jollity
That is not able a dull man to devise ;
He must have knowen Love and his servíce,
And been a feastly man, as fresh as May,
That shouldè you devisen such array.

Who could tell you of the form of the uncouth dances, or of the fresh countenances engaged in them,—

Such subtle lookings and dissimulings,

for dread of the perceptions of jealous men ?

No man but Launcelot, and he is dead.

I pass over, therefore, all this delight. In this jolliness I leave them, until men address themselves to supper.

The steward bade them carry round the spices, and also the wine, during all the melody ; the squires and the ushers go, and the wine and spices are immediately brought. They eat and drink, and, when this was ended, proceed unto the temple, as was proper.

The service done, they suppen all by day.
What needeth you rehearsen their array ?
Each man wot well that at a kingès feast
Is plenty to the most and to the least,
And dainties more than be in my knowíng.
And after supper go'th this noble king
To see this horse of brass, with all his rout[2]
Of lordès and of ladies him about.
Such wond'ring was there on this horse of brass,

that since the great siege of Troy, where men also wondered upon a horse, there never was such wondering as now.

[1] The constellation. [2] Suite, company.

But, finally, the king askèd the knight
The virtuè of this courser, and the might,
And pray'd him tellen of his governance.
The horse anon 'gan for to trip and dance,
When that the knight laid hand upon his rein,
And saide :

"Sir, there is no more to say, but that when you wish to ride anywhere, ye must turn a pin that stands in his ear, which I shall tell you between ourselves. Ye must also name to him what place or what country ye wish to ride to. And when ye come where you wish to stay, bid him descend, and then turn another pin, for there lies the effect of all the contrivance,

And he will down descend and do your will,
And in that place he will abidè still,
Though all the world had the contrary swore,
He shall not thence be drawen——

nor be carried. Or if you wish to bid him to begone from thence, turn this pin, and he will immediately vanish out of the sight of every kind of person, and come again, be it day or night, when you please to call him again, in such manner as I shall tell you, and that full soon, betwixt ourselves :

Bid when you lust, there is no more to do."
Informèd when the king was of the knight,
And had conceivèd in his wit aright
The manner and the form of all this thing,
Full glad and blithe this noble doughty king
Repaireth to his revel as beforn.
The bridle is unto the tower yborne,

and kept among his pleasant and dear jewels. The horse vanished out of their sight, in what manner I know not. . . . Thus I leave in jollity and mirth Cambuscan feasting his lords, until that

Well nigh the day began to spring.

THE SECOND PART.

THE nurse of digestion, the

Sleep
'Gan to him wink, and bade of him take keep
That mirthè and labour will have his rest ;
And with a gaping mouth he them all kessed,[1]
And said, that it was time to lien down,
For blood was in his domination :

[1] Kissed.

"Cherisheth blood, natúrès friend," quoth he.
They thanken him, gapíng, by two and three;
And every wight 'gan draw him to his rest,
As sleep them bade; they took it for the best.
Their dreamès shall not now be told for me.

Their heads were full of fumes, that cause dreams of no consequence. They slept, for the most part, until it was full day, Canace only excepted. She had been, like women, very moderate; for she had taken her leave of her father, in order to go to rest, soon after it was evening. She did not desire to grow pale, nor to appear on the morrow unfit for feasts. She

kept her firstè sleep, and then awoke:
For such a joy she in her heartè took
Both of her quaintè ring and her mirrór,
That twenty timè changèd her coloúr;

and in her sleep, through the impression of her mirror, she had a vision. Wherefore ere the sun began to glide upwards, she calleth upon her mistress beside her, and said she wished to get up.

These oldè women that be gladly wise,
As is their mistress, answer'd her anon,
And said, "Madamè, whither would ye gone
Thus early? for the folk be all in rest."
"I will," quoth she, "arisen, for me lest[1]
No longer for to sleep, and walk about."
Her mistress clepeth[2] women a great rout,
And up they risen, a ten either a twelve.
Up riseth freshè Canacè herselve,
As ruddy and bright as is the youngè Sun
That in the Ram[3] is ten degrees yrun;
No higher was he when she ready was;
And forth she walketh

easily, a short distance, arrayed fittingly for the pleasant and sweet season,

Lightèly for to play, and walk on foot,

with only five or six of her attendants, and forth she goes in a trench[4] in the park.

The vapour that glided from the earth maketh the sun to seem broad and ruddy; but nevertheless, it was so fair a spectacle that it made all their hearts grow lighter,

[1] Desire.
[2] Calleth.
[3] The constellation.
[4] Or narrow valley.

What for the season, what for the morning,
And for the fowlès that she heardè sing
For right anon she wistè what they meant
Right by their song, and knew all their intent.
The knottè[1] why that every tale is told,
If that it be tarriéd till lust[2] be cold

of them that have hankered after it a long time,

The savour passeth ever longér the more
For fulsomeness of the prolixity ;
And by this samè reason thinketh me
I shouldè to the knottè condescend,
And maken of her walking soon an end.
Amidst a tree, for-dry,[3] as white as chalk,
As Canacè was playing in her walk,
There sat a falcon over her head full high,
That with a piteous voice began to cry,
That all the wood resounded of her cry ;
Beaten had she herself so piteously
With both her wingès, till the reddè blood
Ran endèlong the tree, there as she stood ;

And ever the same she constantly shrieked and cried, and with her beak so plucked herself, that there is no tiger nor cruel beast that dwelleth in forest or wood but must have wept, if he could weep,

For sorrow of her, she shriek'd alway so loud.

No man ever lived who could well describe a falcon, that heard of another so fair,

As well of plumage, as of gentleness,
Of shape, of all that might yreckoned be
A falcon peregrinè seemèd she

of foreign land ;

and ever as she stood
She swoonèd now and now for lack of blood,
Till well nigh is she fallen from the tree.
This fairè kingès daughter, Canacè,
That on her finger bare the quaintè ring,
Through which she understood well every thing

that any bird may say in his language, and could answer him in his language again, hath understood what the falcon said ; and she almost died for pity.

[1] The *knotte* means the nucleus—the kernel—the essential matter or object of every tale.

[2] Pleasure.

[3] Very dry.

And to the tree she go'th full hastily,
And on this falcon looketh piteously,
And held her lap abroad, for well she wist
The falcon mustè fallen from the twist
When that it swoonèd next, for lack of blood.
A longè while to waiten her she stood,
Till at the last she spake in this mannére
Unto the hawk, as ye shall after hear.

"What is the cause, if it may be told, that ye be in this furious pain of hell?" quoth Canace unto the hawk.

"Is this for sorrow of death, or ellès love?
For as I trow, these be the causes two
That causen most a gentle heartè woe.
Of other harm it needeth not to speak,

for ye yourself take vengeance upon yourself; which proveth well that either ire or dread must be the cause of your cruelty, since I see no other chase you. For the love of God, show favour unto yourself;

Or what may be your help? for west nor east
Ne saw I never ere now no bird ne beast,
That farèd with himself so piteously.
Ye slay me with your sorrow verily.
I have of you so great compassïon.
For Goddès love come from the tree adown;
And as I am a kingès daughter true,
If that I verily the causè knew
Of your disease, if it lay in my might
I would amend it ere that it were night,
As wisely help me greatè God of kind.
And herbès shall I right enough yfind,

with which to heal speedily your hurt." Then shrieked the falcon yet more piteously than ever, and anon fell to the ground, and lieth in a swoon as dead as lieth a stone. And Canace hath taken her in her lap until she began to awake; and after she had started out of her swoon, she said thus, in her hawk's language,

"That pity runneth soon in gentle heart[1]
(Feeling his similitude in painès smart)
Is provèd allè day, as men may see,
As well by work as by authority.
For gentle heartè keepeth gentleness.

[1] Chaucer's favourite line. He repeats it five or six times in his different works, as Prof. Skeat says.

I see well that ye have on my distress
Compassïon, my fairè Canacè,
Of very womanly benignity,
That nature in your principles hath set.

Not for any hope to fare the better, but in order to obey your free heart, and to make others beware by me, . . . I will confess my harm." And even whilst she told her sorrows, Canace wept as she would dissolve to water, until the Falcon bade her be still, and with a sigh she thus said to her :

" There I was bred (alas, that ilkè day !)
And foster'd in a rock of marble grey
So tenderly, that nothing ailèd me.
I ne wist not what was adversity
Till I could flee full high undér the sky.
Then dwell'd a tercèlet me fastè by,
That seemèd well of allè gentleness.
All were he full of treason and falsenéss,
It was so wrappèd under humble cheer,
And under hue of truth in such mannére,
Under pleasánce, and under busy pain,
That no wight weenèd that he couldè feign,
So deep in grain he diëd his colóurs.
Right as a serpent hides him under flowers,
Till he may see his timè for to bite.

Just so this hypocrite of the god of love doth his observances and his ceremonies,

Under subtle colôurs and ácquaintance
That soundeth unto gentleness of love.
As on a tomb is all there fair above,
And under is the corpse, which that ye wot :
Such was this hypocrite, both cold and hot,
And in this wise he servèd his intent,
That, save the fiend, none wistè what he meant :
Till he so long had weepèd and complainèd,
And many a year his service to me feignèd,
Till that mine heart, too piteous, and too nice,
All innocent of his cruél malíce,
For fear eke of his death, as thoughtè me,
Upon his oathès and his surèty,
Granted him love, on this conditïoun,
That evermore mine honour and renown
Were savèd

both in private and in public.

This is to say, that, after his desert,
I gave him all mine heart, and all my thought,

(and God and he know, in other ways, nothing ;)

And took his heart in change of mine for aye;

but truly is it said, many a day is gone since. A true wight and a thief think not alike.

And when he saw the thing so far ygone
That I had granted him fully my love
In such a guise as I have said above,
And given him my truë heart as free
As he swore that he gave his heart to me,
Anon this tiger, full of doubleness,
Fell on his knees with so great dévoutness,
With so high reverence, as by his cheer,
So like a gentle lover of mannére,
So ravished, as it seemèdè, for joy,
That never Jason, ne Parês of Troy—
Jason? certes, ne never other man,
Since Lamech was, that alderfirst[1] began
To loven two, as written folk beforn,[2]
Ne never since the firstè man was born,
Ne couldè man, by twenty thousand part,
Counterfeit the sophemès of his art,

nor were worthy to unbuckle his shoe; nor should their doubleness of feigning approach his; nor could they so thank one

as he did me:
His manner was a heaven for to see
To any woman, were she never so wise;

so painted he . . .

As well his wordès, as his countenance.
And I so lov'd him for his obeisánce,
And for the truth I deemèd in his heart,
That if so were that anything him smart,
All were it never so little, and I it wist,
Me thought I felt death at mine heartè twist.
And shortly, so far forth this thing is went,
That my will was his willès instrument;
This is to say, my will obeyed his will
In allè thing,

as far as reason permitted, that kept ever the bounds of my worship. Nor had I ever thing so dear nor dearer, God knows, as him; nor ever shall have more.

This lasted longer than a year or two,
That I supposèd of him nought but good.
But finally, thus at the last it stood,
That fortune wouldè that he mustè twinne[3]
Out of the placè, which that I was in.

[1] First of all. [2] As folk write of old time. [3] Depart.

Whe'r[1] me was woe, it is no questïon ;
I cannot make of it descriptïon.
For one thing dare I tellen boldèly,
I know what is the pain of death thereby,
What harm I felt that he might not believe.
So on a day of me he took his leave,
So sorrowful eke, that I ween'd verily
That he had felt as muchel harm as I,
When that I heard him speak and saw his hue.
But nathèless, I thought he was so true,
And eke that he repairen should again
Within a little whilè, sooth to sain ;—
And reason would eke that he mustè go
For his honoúr, as oft it happeth so,
Then I made virtue of necessity,
And took it well, since that it mustè be.
As I best might, I hid from him my sorrow,
And took him by the hand, Saint John to borrow,[2]
And saidè thus : "Lo, I am yourès all,
Both such as I have been to you and shall.
What he answér'd, it needeth not rehearse ;
Who can say bet' than he, who can do worse ;
When he hath all well said, then hath he done ;

therefore it behoveth one to have a full long spoon that shall eat with a fiend : thus have I heard said.

So at the last, he mustè forth his way :
And forth he fleeth, till he come there him lest,[3]
When it came him to purpose for to rest,
I trow he haddè thilkè text in mind,
That allè thing repairing to his kind
Gladdeth himself ; thus say men, as I guess :
Men loven of kindè newèfangleness,
As birdès do that men in cages feed.
For though thou night and day take of them heed,
And strew their cagè fair and soft as silk,
And give them sugar, honey, bread, and milk,
Yet right anon as that his door is up,
He with his feet will spurnè down his cup,
And to the wood he will, and wormès eat ;
So newèfangled be they of their meat,
And loven novelties of proper kind ;
No gentleness of blood ne may them bind.
So fared this tercèlet, alas the day !
Though he were gentle born, and fresh, and gay,
And goodly for to see, and humblé, and free,
He saw upon a time a kitè flee,

[1] Whether. [2] That is to say, to borrow the saint's name in pledge of the truth of her asseverations. [3] It pleased him.

And suddenly he lov'd this kitè so,
That all his love is clean from me ago' ;[1]
And hath his truthè falsèd in this wise.
Thus hath the kite my love in her servíse,
And I am lorn withouten remedy."

And with that word the Falcon began to cry, and swooneth again in Canace's lap. Great was the sorrow for the hawk's harm made by Canace and all her women. They knew not how they might gladden the falcon. But Canace beareth her home in her lap, and began to wrap her softly in plasters where with her beak she had hurt herself.

And now Canace cannot but dig herbs out of the ground, and make new salves of herbs, precious and fine of hue, to heal the hawk. From day to night she busies herself with all her might. And by her bed's head she made a mew, and covered it with blue velvet,

In sign of truth that is in woman seen.
And all without the mew is painted green,
In which were painted all these falsè fowls
As be these tidifes, tercelettes, and owls ;
And piës, on them for to cry and chide,
Right for despite were painted them beside.

Thus leave I Canace keeping her hawk. I will no more at present speak of her ring till it come again into my purpose to say

How that this Falcon got her love again
Repentant, as the story telleth us,
By mediation of Camballus,
The kingès son, of which that I you told[2] ;

But henceforth I will hold my course to speak of adventures and battles : such great marvels were never yet heard.

First will I tellen you of Cambuscan,
That in his timè many a city wan.
And after will I speak of Algarsife,
How that he won Theodora to his wife,
For whom full oft in great perîl he was,
N' had he been holpén by the horse of brass.
And after will I speak of Camballo,
That fought in listès with the brethren two[3]
For Canacè, ere that he might her win :
And there I left I will again begin.

[1] Agone. [2] Where he is called Camballo.
[3] The two brethren are presumably unnamed lovers also of Canace.

REMARKS ON THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

THERE is a great deal of admiration prevalent in the critical world that would be well exchanged for a little silent and thoughtful study of the person or thing admired. By an easily explained but peculiarly irrational process, the criticism we refer to ceases to inquire into a great writer's excellences just as they grow more and more numerous and of a higher and subtler quality; and whether it be as with one class of admirers—from sheer inability to grasp the mighty subjects opened, or from an almost impatient sense of the difficulty of adding anything of value to the endless stores of commentary and illustration before poured out—as with another, the common result is merely to heap up fresh epithets, as unmeaning and as mischievous as those that the satirist so good-humouredly laughed at in connection with Shakspere,

> whom you, and every playhouse bill,
> Style the Divine—the Matchless—what you will![1]

That this is a very mischievous result must appear evident when we consider that the best chosen words or phrases are only of value so long as they call up to the mind of the hearer or reader the ideas that originally suggested them; and none will do this when the gloss of novelty has worn off by frequent repetition; they will then merely occupy the mind as with so much useless lumber, and help to exclude the presence of the very ideas they were intended to introduce.

Between the two classes of admirers—those who could not thoroughly understand Chaucer, and those whose sense of the difficulty of worthily explaining what they thought and felt for him has apparently made them slacken their endeavours to worthily think and feel—the poet of the 'Canterbury Tales' has suffered grievous wrong; and while the existence of the first class might have been anticipated, and may for the most be disregarded—the second, including as it does some of the highest names in English literature, cannot but suggest to us the importance of getting rid of all mere declamatory criticism, however reverential the shape it assumes, and demanding from all who praise as well as from all who condemn reasons for the faith that is in them. In so doing they would learn much, and we still more.

We have already (in former pages) seen how Dryden professed to admire Chaucer, and what practical results his

[1] Pope—'Imitations of Horace,' Epistle I.

admiration brought with it. We now propose to endeavour to give point to the foregoing remarks by a brief consideration of the treatment the Squire's Tale has received from those whose of truer poetical nature than Dryden might have been its most judicious as well as its most enthusiastic and illustrious admirers. It is Spenser who speaks of

> Dan Chaucer, well of English undefil'd,

and who writes these charming lines in the 'Fairy Queen':—

> Then pardon, O most sacred happy spirit!
> That I may lawfully love my love,
> And steal from thee the meed of thy due merit,
> That none durst ever whilst thou wast alive,
> And, being dead, in vain yet many strive;
> Ne dare I like; but, through infusion sweet,
> Of thine own spirit which doth in me survive,
> I follow here the footing of thy feet,
> That with thy meaning so I may the rather meet.

And how does Edmund Spenser fulfil a project so full of hopefulness? Let us see. Chaucer, as though half anticipating the non-completion, or mutilation of the poem, has given us one of the most explanatory of finger-posts, showing in what direction any one must move who would "follow the footing" of his feet. In the concluding passage of the incomplete poem, Chaucer says,

> First I will tellen you of Cambuscan,
> That in his time many a city wan;

But Spenser will do no such thing; of the chief hero of the tale he says nothing.

Chaucer then continues—

> And after will I speak of Algarsife
> How that he won Theodora to his wife,
> For whom full oft in great peril he was,
> Ne had he been holpén by the horse of brass.

Of this matter again, the horse being the chief of the material agencies of the story, Spenser says nothing.

Chaucer goes on—

> And after will I speak of Camballo,
> That fought in listès with the brethren *two*
> For Canace, ere that he might her win,

or in other words, ere the latter might extricate her from some danger into which she had fallen; or probably from two unnamed lovers of Canace, as we have already suggested. This is the sole point with which Spenser troubles himself, and as far as his

avowed object and Chaucer's reputation is concerned (we must be thoroughly understood not to extend our remarks to stretch a hair's-breadth further), it is impossible, we think, to compliment him upon what he has done with it. The mere isolation of a fragment of a building from the work of so consummate an architect as Chaucer, and the unnatural development of that fragment into a something as big as the whole was intended to have been, was an act sufficient in itself to prevent all chance of Spenser's treading in Chaucer's footsteps, or "meeting" with his "meaning." But that is not all. The two brethren become three, known by the very un-Chaucerian names of Diamond, Triamond, and Priamond, and it is they who win Canace from her brother, Camballo, not he who wins her from them.

Nor can it be denied that even in the execution of this presumed part of Chaucer's design there is not the smallest resemblance to Chaucer. The tone of the 'Fairy Queen' is utterly unlike the tone of the 'Squire's Tale,' though both deal in similar subjects. Beautiful and aerial as is the world into which the one takes you, it is so unlike in every respect the world you leave behind, that the inexperienced senses refuse to perform their office with their usual vigour and precision; a haze seems to envelop every object; the whole affects you with a sense of unreality: the world of the other, on the contrary, seems after all but the same world, for you never long lose the feel of the firm earth, and, as in the old fable, both poet and reader seem constantly to derive fresh strength and buoyancy from that very circumstance. In a word, Spenser's romance, though built up in a great measure of natural materials, is a highly artificial creation; Chaucer's romance is Nature's own. He loves to reveal to you a thousand fresh phases of romantic loveliness—to open to you a thousand beautiful and mysterious paths leading you know not whither, but through some of which he becomes your guide: alas, that so many of them through which he had intended to take us should now remain for ever unexplored!

Let us here compare Spenser's description of the three lovers of Canace with Chaucer's portrait of the Squire himself, who tells the tale:—

SPENSER.

Amongst those knights there were three brethren bold,
Three bolder brethren never were yborn,
Born of one mother in one happy mould,
Born at one burden in one happy morn;
Thrice happy mother, and thrice happy morn,
That bore three such, three such not to be fond:[1]

[1] Found.

Her name was Agape, whose children wern
All three as one; the first hight Priamond,
The second Diamond, the youngest Triamond.

Stout Priamond, but not so strong to strike
Strong Diamond, but not so stout a knight;
But Triamond was stout and strong alike:
On horseback used Triamond to fight;
And Priamond on foot had more delight;
But horse and foot knew Diamond to wield:
With curtaxe used Diamond to smite,
And Triamond to handle spear and shield,
But spear and curtaxe both used Priamond in field.

These three did love each other dearly well,
And with so firm affection were allied
As if but one soul in them all did dwell,
Which did her power into three parts divide;
Like three fair branches budding far and wide,
That from one root derived their vital sap;
And like that root, that doth her life divide,
Their mother was; and had full blessed hap
These three so noble babes to bring forth at one clap.

CHAUCER.

There was his son, a young Squiér,
A lover and a lusty bachelor,
With lockès curl'd as they were laid in press.
Of twenty year he was of age, I guess.
Of his statûre he was of even length,
And wonderly deliver,[1] and great of strength.
And he had been some time in chevachie[2]
In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy;
And borne him well, as in so little space,
In hope to standen in his lady's grace.
Embroidered was he, as it were a mead,
All full of freshè flow'res, white and red.
Singing he was, or fluting all the day:
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown, with sleevès long and wide.
Well could he sit on horse, and fairè ride.
He couldè songès well make, and indite,
Joust, and eke dance, and well pourtray and write.
So hot he lovèd, that by nightertale[3]
He slept no more than doth a nightingale.
Courteous he was, lowly, and serviceáble,
And carv'd before his father at the table.

Are not both these passages very beautiful?—are they not utterly unlike? How dreamy is the one, how full of waking,

[1] Active, nimble. [2] A military expedition. [3] Night-time.

robust life the other! There may be flesh and blood beneath those three graceful but somewhat shadowy forms, but as to Chaucer's Squire—the very doubt makes one smile. We know him as well as if we were his personal every-day acquaintances. On turning to the page that restores him to us after a momentary absence, we perceive him to be as surely present as if the warm pressure of his hand had not yet past from our own.

But perhaps the most remarkable of all the passages in the 'Fairy Queen' is that in which Spenser says of the 'Squire's Tale'—

> But wicked Time, that all good thoughts doth waste,
> And works of noblest wits to naught outwear,
> *That famous monument hath quite defaced.*

What does this mean? We know not, but perhaps may learn when we can solve another problem—namely, why these lovely lines from the 'Franklin's Tale'

CHAUCER.

> Love *will not* be constrained by mastery!
> When mastery cometh, the God of Love anon
> *Beateth his wings*, and farewell, he is gone!

were altered into the following by

SPENSER.

> *Ne may* Love be compelled by mastery,
> For, soon as mastery comes, sweet Love anon
> *Taketh his nimble wings*, and soon away is gone!

We must give yet another illustration of the effects of the substitution of habitual praise for habitual study of the great founder of our literature. That the 'Squire's Tale,' unfinished as it is, is a poem unequalled in its kind,—that it is, in feeling, power, and almost in effect, the most perfect of compositions, notwithstanding its incompleteness, are facts upon which all poetic minds have long been agreed; how then is it that of the many who have written upon this tale, not one, so far as we are aware, has ever exhibited the slightest consciousness that even in this broken coronal of precious gems there is enshrined a still costlier one—the Story of the Falcon? We have elsewhere pointed out that Mr. Cowden Clarke, in his prose 'Tales from Chaucer,' observes—"If the whole of this portion of the story were transposed into prose, it would, I fear, prove uninteresting to the young reader. The original is clothed in *nervous and beautiful verse*, and will, at some future time, amply reward the youthful, imaginative mind, that has overcome the not arduous

toil of comprehending freely the quaint and unfortunately obsolete dialect of this very great and beautiful poet." Later, while giving the poetical 'Riches of Chaucer,' in their own poetical shape, to the public, and thus practically proving to many a grateful reader that their "dialect" was anything but "obsolete," Mr. Clarke writes upon this same portion of the 'Squire's Tale,' "The deserted fair one being somewhat prolix, and withal not interesting in her complaint, we will, with the reader's consent, pass on to the conclusion of the Tale." Now we must be excused, if we not only prefer the earlier to the later estimate of the passage in question, but add that, in our opinion, "the nervous and beautiful verse" is but the medium through which is conveyed the *most exquisitely pathetic description ever given to the world of a devoted and unrequited love.* We know nothing of a similar kind that can be even compared with it. There are single lines in this complaint (so marvellously misunderstood and neglected) that express more than many books that have taken the same subject for their theme. Here is one such line—

My will became *his* willès instrument.

One would have thought it would have been impossible to have read the first half-dozen lines without seeing that it is no bird, but one of the most trusting of human beings that has been deceived; and that the transmigration into the falcon is but a part of the fairy machinery of the tale, and *probably only a temporary transformation.*

Since this passage was written, we have learnt that Leigh Hunt, the best of Chaucerian critics, had before pointed out the probability that the "falcon was a human being in a temporary state of metamorphosis, a circumstance very common in tales of the East;" but even he, with an eye and heart ever open to the subtlest of poetic beauties, has nothing more to say upon this portion of the tale. Let us, however, for a moment recall some of its passages; let us forget the bird, and think it is some human heart crying out from the depth of its anguish, and telling its whole story to a listener who is ready to share and if possible alleviate its griefs; let us, in a word, understand that it is a woman, the daughter haply of some prince or king,[1] who says

There I was bred—alas that ilkè day—
And fostered in a *home* of marble grey
So tenderly that nothing ailèd me.
I ne wist not, what was adversity.

[1] Prof. Brandl tried to show, in 'Englische Studien,' 1888, that she was a step-daughter of John of Gaunt, but Mr. Kittredge has proved this solution of the problem impossible. 'Eng. Stud.,' 1889.

Let us also understand the true human character of him who dwelled

me fastè by ;
That seemèd well of allè gentleness,
All were he full of treason and falsenéss,
It was so wrappèd under humble cheer,
And under hue of truth in such mannére,
Under pleasánce, and under busy pain,

(or trouble to serve her),

That no wight could have ween'd he couldè feign,
So deep in grain he dyëd his colours,
Right as a serpent hides him under flowers,
Till he may see his timè for to bite.

The simple, credulous, unsuspecting heart

too piteous and too nice,
All innocent of his *cruél malice*,
For fearè of his death

granted him the love he sought. And then

This tiger full of doubleness
Fell on his knees with so great dévoutness,
With so high reverence, as by his cheer,[1]
So like a gentle lover by mannére,
So ravish'd as it seemèd for the joy

that

His manner was a heaven for to see
To any woman were she never so wise.

How could such a one be loved too well? "Shortly," says she, "so far

this thing is went
That my will was his willès instrument."

For a year or two all goes well. But a time comes that he must leave her. It is no question what was her sorrow. But when she saw his hue, and heard his words, she believed he felt as much as herself, and that somewhat consoled her. Then, too, she reasoned that it was necessary for his honour to go away, but that he would soon return. So she made a virtue of necessity. "As I best might," she says, "I hid from him my sorrow," and, taking him by the hand at parting, said

"Lo, I am yourès all,
Both such as I have been to you, and shall.
What he answér'd it needeth not rehearse,
Who can say bet' than he, who can do worse,
When he hath all well said, then hath he done."

[1] As was exhibited by his cheer or behaviour.

He departs — forgets her — and (the old story), loves another.

Does Chaucer leave the Tale finally here? One might have supposed so, from the strange neglect with which this part has been treated, and from the very general misapprehension that exists as to its being merely a bird's history that is narrated? On the contrary, the poet expressly tells us that he shall have to say

> How that this falcon gat her love again,
> Repentant as the story telleth us,
> By mediatïon of Camballus,
> The kingès son.

Surely, as we consider all these acts of commission or omission on the part of Chaucer's most eminent admirers, we cannot but perceive the existence of the error we have endeavoured to point out—too much talk about Chaucer—too little study of him. We may add also that the same consideration helps to give new significancy to Milton's words, and that if we are to have the 'Squire's Tale' ever completed, we must indeed

> Call up him that left half told
> The story of Cambúscan bold:

lines, by the way, that themselves help to support the point we have endeavoured to develop in these remarks, for even Milton could not leave Chaucer unaltered as we should expect to see Milton left by one of his admirers: Cambuscán becomes here changed to Cambúscan, with no improvement of the original, which in the manuscripts is spelt Cambynskan, for Genghis Khan, in Marco Polo's 'Travels,' whence the 'Squire's Tale' is partly taken: see Prof. Skeat's edition for the Clarendon Press; and consult his two volumes for other tales too. John Lane's cumbrous and wordy continuation of the 'Squire's Tale' (A.D. 1616, revised 1630) has been edited for the Chaucer Society by Dr. Furnivall; and Mr. Clouston has at press a sketch of most of the analogues of the Tale, especially of the French romance of *Cleomades*, which Chaucer may have known, and of parts of which the Chevalier de la Chatelaine some years ago published an English verse translation.

John Lane was a friend of Milton's father, and they wrote verses to one another.

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

IN Armorica, that is called Bretagne, there was a knight who loved, and who took great pains

To serve a lady in his bestè wise;
And many a labour, many a great emprise,
He for his lady wrought ere she were won,
For she was one, the fairest under sun;

and also sprang from so high a kindred, that this knight for dread hardly durst

Tell her his woe, his pain, and his distress.
But at the last she for his worthiness,

and especially for his meek obedience, hath caught so great a pity of his suffering, that privately she agreed with him to take him for her husband and her lord—of such lordship as men have over their wives. And in order that they might live the more blissful,

Of his free will he swore her, as a knight,
That never in his will by day nor night,

would he take upon him any mastery against her will; neither would he show himself to her as jealous, but obey her, and follow her will in all things as any lover may do to his lady. Except that to avoid shame to his rank,[2] he would have the name of sovereignty. She thanked him; and with full great humility, said,—"Sir, since of your gentleness

Ye proffer me to have so large a rein,

I would to God that never betwixt us two, through my guilt, there were either war or strife.

Sir, I will be your humble truë wife,
Have here my truth, till that mine heartè brest."[3]
Thus be they both in quiet and in rest.

[1] Undertaking. [2] "For shame of his degree." [3] Burst.

One thing, sirs, I dare safely say, that friends, if they would long hold company, must obey each other.

> Love will not be constrain'd by mastery;
> When mastery cometh, the god of love anon
> Beateth his wings, and, farewell, he is gone.
> Love is a thing, as any spirit, free.
> Women of kind[1] desiren liberty,
> And not to be constrainèd as a thrall;
> And so do men, if I the sooth say shall.
> Look, who that is most patïent in love;
> He is at his advantage all above.

Patience is certainly a high virtue; for it vanquisheth, as these clerks say,

> Thingès that rigour never should attain.
> For every word men may not chide ne 'plain.

Learn to suffer, or, so may I *gone*, ye *shall* learn it whether ye will or no;

> For in this world certáin no wight there is
> That he ne doth or saith some time amiss.
> Irè, sicknéss, or constellatïon,
> Wine, woe, or changing of complexïon[2]
> Causeth full oft to do amiss or speaken:
> On every wrong men may not be a wreaken.

According to the time, every one must be temperate who possesses self-government. And therefore hath this wise and worthy knight, in order to live in ease, promised her sufferance.

> And she to him full wisely 'gan to swear,
> That never should there be default in her.
> Here may men see an humble wise accord:
> Thus hath she take her servant and her lord,
> Servant in love, and lord in marrïage.
> Then was he both in lordship and servage?
> Servage! nay, but in lordship all above,
> Since he hath both his lady and his love:
> His lady certes, and his wife alsó,
> The which that law of love accordeth to.
> And when he was in this prosperity,
> Home with his wife he go'th to his country,
> Not far from Penmark, there his dwelling was,
> Whereas he liveth in bliss and in soláce,
> Who couldè tell (but he had wedded be[3])
> The joy, the ease, and the prosperity
> That is betwixt a husband and his wife?

[1] By nature. [2] Aspect, behaviour. [3] Been.

This blissful existence lasteth a year and more; until the knight of which I speak, who was called Arviragus, prepared himself to go and dwell a year or two in England, that was also called Bretagne, to seek worship and honour in arms (for all his pleasure was set on such labour), and there he dwelt two years: thus saith the book.

Now will I stint of this Arviragus,
And speak I will of Dorigen his wife,
That loveth her husband as her heartès life.
And for his absence weepeth she and sigheth,
As do these noble wivès when them liketh.
She mourneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, 'plaineth,
Desire of his presénce her so distraineth[1]
That all this widè world she set at nought.
Her friendès, which that knew her heavy thought,
Comfórted her in all that e'er they may;
They preachen her, they tell her night and day
That causèless she slay'th herself, alas!
And every comfort possible in this case
They do to her, with all their business,
And all to make her leave her heaviness.
By process, as ye knowen every one,
Men may so longè graven in the stone
Till some figúre therein imprinted be:
So long have they comfórted her, that she
Received hath, by hope and by reasón,
The imprinting of their consolatïon,
Through which her greatè sorrow 'gan assuage:
She may not alway 'duren in such rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath sent his letters home of his welfáre,
And that he would come hastily again,
Or elles had this sorrow her heartè slain.
Her friendès saw her heartè 'gan to slake,
And prayèd her on knees, for Goddès sake,
To come and roamen in their company,
Away to drive her darkè fantasy;
And, finally, she granted that request,
For well she saw that it was for the best.
Now stood her castle fastè by the sea,
And often with her friendès walkèd she,

to amuse herself on the high bank, where she saw many a ship and barge

Sailing their course, where as them lust to go:
But yet was there a parcel of her woe:

[1] Seizeth, takes possession of.

For to herself full often saidè she,
"Is there no ship, of so many as I see,
Will bringen home my lord?

Then were my heart healed of all its bitter and sore pains.

Another time there would she sit and think,
And cast her eyen downward from the brink;
But when she saw the grisly rockès blake,[1]
For very fear so would her heartè quake,
That on her feet she might not her sustain.
Then would she sit adown upon the green,
And piteously into the sea behold,
And say right thus, with sorrowful sighès cold:
"Eternal God! that through thy púrveyance
Leadest this world by certain governance;
In idle, so men say, ye nothing make:
But, Lord! these grisly fiendly rockès blake[1]!
That seemen rather a foul confusïon
Of work than any fair creatïon
Of such a perfect wisè God and stable;
Why have ye wrought this work unreasonáble?
For by this workè south, north, east, and west,
There n' is yfoster'd man, ne bird, ne beast;
It doth no good, to my wit, but annoyeth.
See ye not, Lord! how mánkind it destroyeth?
A hundred thousand bodies of mankind
Have rockès slain, all be they not in mind,
Which mánkind is so fair part of thy work,
That thou it madest like to thine own hand work.
Then seemeth it ye had great charity
Toward mankind; but how then may it be
That ye such meanès make it to destroyen,
Which meanès do no good, but ever annoyen?

I know well, clerks will say as they please by arguments that all is fo the best, though I cannot know the causes. But that God that made the wind to blow, now preserve my lord: this is my conclusion! I leave all disputes to clerks. But would to God that all these black rocks were sunk into hell for his sake.

These rockès slay mine heartè for the fear."
Thus would she say, with many a piteous tear.

Her friends saw that it was no diversion, but a discomfort to her to roam by the sea; so they arranged to play somewhere else. They lead her by rivers and by springs, and also in other delightful places.

They dancen, and they play at chess and tables.
So on a day, right in the morrow tide,
Unto a garden that was there beside,

[1] Black.

In which that they had made their ordinance
Of victaille and of other púrveyance,
They go and play them all the longè day ;
And this was on the sixth morrów of May ;
Which May had painted with his softè showers,
This garden full of leavès and of flowers ;
And craft of mannès hand so curiously
Arrayèd had this garden truëly,
That never was there garden of such price,
But if it were the very Paradise.
The odour of flow'rès and the freshè sight
Would have made any pensive heartè light
That ever was born, but if too great sicknéss
Or too great sorrow held it in distress,
So full it was of beauty and pleasánce.
And after dinner gonnen they to dance
And sing also, save Dorigen alone ;
She made alwáy her cómplaint and her moan,
For she ne saw him on the dancè go
That was her husband and her love also.
But nathèless she must a time abide,
And with good hope she let her sorrow slide.
Upon this dance, amongès other men,
Danced a squiér before Dorigen,
That fresher was and jollier of array,
As to my doom,[1] than is the month of May.
He singeth, and danceth, passing any man
That is or was since that the world began.
Therewith he was, if men should him descrive,[2]
One of the bestè faring men alive ;
Young, strong, right virtuous, and rich, and wise,
And well beloved, and holden in great prize.

And shortly, if I shall tell the truth, this lusty squire, servant to Venus, who was called Aurelius, hath loved Dorigen best of any creature two years and more, as it happened, she knowing nothing at all of the matter. He durst never tell her what grieved him,

Withouten cup he drank all his penánce.

He was in despair. He durst say nothing ; save he would somewhat in his songs betray his woe in a kind of general complaining.

He said he lov'd, and was belov'd no thing ;
Of suchè matter made he many lays,
Songès, complaintès, roundels, virelayes ;
How that he durstè not his sorrow tell,
But languisheth, as fury doth in hell ;

[1] Judgment. [2] Describe.

And die, he said, he must, as did Echó
For Nárcissus, that durst not tell her woe.

In other manner than this he durst not betray his grief, except that perchance sometimes at dances, where young folk keep up their customs,

It may well be, he lookèd on her face,
In such a wise, as man that asketh grace,
But nothing wistè she of his intent.

Nevertheless, it happened before they departed, because he was her neighbour, and a man of honour and worship, and she had known him of old, they fell into speech; and from that time Aurelius drew nearer and nearer to his purpose. And when he saw his time, he said thus—

"Madame," quoth he, "by God that this world made,
So that I wist it might your heartè glad,
I would that day that your Arviragus
Went on the sea, that I Aurelius,
Had went[1] that I should never come again;
For well I wot my service is in vain,
My guerdon n' is but bursting of mine heart,
Mádam, ruéth upon my painès smart,
For with a word ye may me slay or save,
Here at your foot, God would that I were grave.[2]

I have no opportunity to say more. Have mercy, sweet, or you will cause me to die."

She 'gan to look upon Aurelius:
"Is this your will (quoth she), and say ye thus?
Never erst (quoth she), ne wist I what ye meant:
But now, Aurelie, I know your intent,
By thilkè God that gave me soul and life,
Ne shall I never be an untrue wife,
In word, ne work. As far as I have wit,
I will be his to whom that I am knit:
Take this for final answer as of me."
But after that, in play, thus saidè she:
"Aurelie (quoth she), by high God above,
Yet will I granten you to be your love,
(Since I you see so piteously complain)
Lookè what day that endèlong Bretagne
Ye rémove all the rockès, stone by stone,
That they ne letten[3] ship ne boat to gone[4];
I say, when ye have made these coasts so clean
Of rockès, that there n' is no stone yseen,

[1] Went where. [2] Buried. [3] Hinder. [4] Go.

Then will I love you best of any man,
Have here my truth, in all that ever I can."
"Is there no other grace in you?" quoth he,
"No, by that Lord" (quoth she), "that madè me.
For well I wot that that shall never betide
Let such folly out of your heartè glide."

Sore was Aurelius when he heard this; and he answered with a sorrowful heart: "Madame, this were an impossibility. Then must I die suddenly a horrible death." And with that word he turned away.

There came of her other friends many a one, and roamed up and down the alleys, and knew nothing of this conclusion, but suddenly began

to revel new,
Till that the brightè sun had lost his hue,
For th' horizôn had reft the sun his light;
(This is as much to say as it was night.[1])
And home they go in mirth and in soláce;
Save only wretched Aurelius, alas!
He to his house is gone with sorrowful heart.
He saith, he may not from his death astart,
Him seemeth that he felt his heartè cold.
Up to the heaven his handès 'gan he hold,
And on his kneës bare he set him down,
And in his raving said his orisoun.

For very woe he went out of his senses. He knew not what he spake, but thus he said:—With piteous heart he hath begun to complain to the gods, and first unto the sun:—

"Apollo, god and governor
Of every plantè, herbè, tree, and flower,

that giveth, in accordance with thy declination, to each of them his season and time, as that thy lodging-place changeth low and high—Lord Phœbus cast thy eye of mercy on wretched Aurelius, who am but lost.

"Lo, lord, my lady hath my death ysworn
Withouten guilt, but[2] thy benignity
Upon my deadly heart have some pity;
For well I wot, Lord Phœbus, if you lest,
Ye may me helpen, save my lady, best.
Now vouchèsafe, that I may you devise
How that I may be holp, and in what wise.
Your blissful sister, Lucina the sheen,
That of the sea is chief goddéss and queen,

[1] Note Chaucer's quiz of "poetic diction." [2] Except.

Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,
Yet empèress aboven him is she;
"Ye know well, lord, that right as her desire
Is to be quicked and lighted of your fire,
For which she followeth you full busily;
Right so the sea desireth naturally
To follow her, as she that is goddéss
Both in the sea and rivers more and less.

Wherefore, Lord Phœbus, this is my request: do this miracle, or let my heart burst. At the very next opposition of the heavenly bodies in the sign of the Lion,

"pray her so great a flood to bring,
That five fathóm at least it overspring
The highest rock in Armoric Bretagne,
And let this flood enduren yearès twain;
Then certes to my lady may I say,
Holdeth your hest,[1] the rockès be away.

Lord Phœbus, do this miracle for me. Pray her that she go no faster in her course than ye; . . .

"Then shall she be ever at full alway,
And spring-flood lasten bothè night and day.

And but she vouchsafe in such manner to grant me my sovereign and dear lady,

"Pray her to sinken every rock adown
Into her owen darkè regïoun
Under the ground, there Pluto dwelleth in,
Or never more shall I my lady win.
Thy temple in Delphos will I barefoot seek:
Lord Phœbus! see the tearès on my cheek,
And of my pain have some compassïoun."
And with that word in swoon he fell adown,
And longè time he lay forth in a trance.

His brother, who knew of his suffering, caught him up, and brought him to bed. Despairing in this torment, and in this thought,

Let I this woful creäturè lie,—
Choose he for me whe'r[2] he will live or die.
Arviragus with heal[3] and great honóur
(As he that was of chivalry the flower)
Is comen home, and other worthy men:
O, blissful art thou now, thou Dorigen!
That hast thy lusty husband in thine arms,
The freshè knight, the worthy man of arms,

[1] Promise. [2] Whether. [3] Health.

That loveth thee as his own heartès life.
Nothing lust he to be imaginative
If any wight had spoke (while he was out)
To her of love; he made thereof no doubt:

he attendeth to no such matter,

But danceth, jousteth, and makéth good cheer.

And thus in joy and bliss I let him dwell, and will speak of the sick Aurelius.

In languor and in furious torment thus
Two years and more lay wretch Aurelius
Ere any foot on earth he mightè gone;
No comfort in this timè had he none,
Save of his brother, which that was a clerk;
He knew of all this woe, and all this work;

for certainly to no other creature durst he say a word of the matter. He bare it more secretly under his breast than ever did Pamphilus his love for Galatea. His breast was whole to outward aspect, but in his heart lay the keen arrow. And ye know well that such wounds in surgery are perilous to cure, unless men may touch or get at the arrow.

His brother weepeth and waileth in secret, until at last he remembered that while he was at Orleans in France, as young clerks that be greedy to study curious arts, seek in every hole and corner

Particular sciénces for to learn;

he remembered, that upon a day in his study at Orleans he saw a book of natural magic, which his companion, then a bachelor of law, although he was there to learn another craft, had privily left upon his desk.

This book spake much of operatïons,
Touching the eight and twenty mansïons
That 'longen to the moon, and such folly
As in our dayès n' is not worth a fly;
For holy church's faith, in our believe[1]
Ne suffreth no illusion us to grieve.
And when this bookè was in rémembrance,
Anon for joy his heartè 'gan to dance.

And to himself, privily, he said, "My brother shall soon be recovered from his sickness; for I am sure that there be sciences, by which men make divers shows, such

as these subtle tregetourès[2] play.
For oft at feastès have I heardè say

[1] Belief. [2] Jugglers.

That tregetours, within a hallè large,
Have madè come in water and a barge,
And in the hallè rowen up and down.
Sometime hath seemèd come a grim lyoún,
Sometime a castle all of lime and stone.

And when they like, they make all disappear immediately. Thus seemeth it to every man's sight.

Then I conclude thus: if I might find some old companion at Orleans, that hath these mansions of the moon in remembrance,

Or other magic natural above,
He should well make my brother have his love;
For with an ápparence a clerk may make,
To mannès sight, that all the rockès blake[1]
Of Bretagne were yvoided every one,
And shippès by the brink might come and gone,
And in such form endure a year or two:—

Then were my brother recovered from his wo. Then must she needs hold her promise, or else, at the least, he shall shame her."

Why should I make a long tale of this? Unto his brother's bed he comes, and gives him such comfort to go to Orleans, that he started up anon, and set forth on his way, in hope to be relieved of his care.

When they were come almost to the city, or within two or three furlongs, they met a young clerk roaming by himself, who greeted them thriftily in Latin. And after that, he said a wondrous thing. "I know," quoth he, "the cause of your coming." And ere they went a foot further, he told them all that was in their purpose.

This Breton clerk asked Aurelius of companions he had known in old days, and he answered him they were dead—

For which he wept full often many a tear.

Aurelius alights from his horse anon, and goes home with the magician to his house, who made them quite at ease. They lacked no victuals that might please them. So well-arranged a house as that one was Aurelius never saw in his life.

The magician showed them before they went to supper

Forestès, parkès, full of wildè deer;
Then saw he knightès jousten in a plain,
And, how falcóns have the heron slain.
And after this he did him such pleasánce,
That he him shew'd his lady in a dance,
In which himself he dancèd, as him thought.
And when this master, that this magic wrought

[1] Black.

Saw it was time, he clapp'd his handès two,
And farewell, all the revel is ydo![1]
And yet removed they ne'er out of this house,
Whilès they saw all this sight marvellous.
But in his study, there as[2] his books be,
They saten still, and no wight but they three.

The master called his squire to him, and said, "May we go to supper? It is almost an hour, I undertake, since I bade you make the supper, when that these worthy men went with me into my study, where my books be." "Sir," quoth the squire, "when it liketh you, it is all ready, even though ye will have it just now." "Go we then to supper," quoth he, as

"for the best;
These amorous folk sometimè must have rest."

And after supper they fell in treaty what sum should be the master's reward to remove all the rocks of Bretagne, and also from the Gironde to the mouth of the Seine.

He made it strange, and swore, so God him save,
Less than a thousand pounds he would not have,
Ne gladly for that sum he would not gone.
Aurelius with blissful heart anon
Answerèd thus: "Fie on a thousand pound!
This widè world, which that men say is round,
I would it give, if I were lord of it.

This bargain is completed, for we are agreed. By my truth ye shall be paid truly. But look ye, that from no negligence or sloth ye delay us here longer than the morrow." "Nay," quoth the clerk, "have here my faith in pledge."

To bed goes Aurelius when it so pleased him,

And well nigh allè night he had his rest.
What for his labour and his hope of bliss,

his woeful heart had a relief of its pain. Upon the morrow when it was day, they took the nearest road to Bretagne,—Aurelius, and the magician beside him, and they descended from their horses at the place where they desired to stay.

And this was, as the bookès me remember,
The coldè frosty season of December.
Phœbus wax'd old and huëd like latón,[3]
That in his hotè declinatïon
Shone as the burnish'd gold with streamès bright;
But now in Capricorn adown he 'light,

[1] Done. [2] Where. [3] A dull-looking lead-like metal.

Whereas he shone full pale, I dare well sain.
The bitter frostès with the sleet and rain
Dèstroyèd hath the green in every yard;
Janus sits by the fire with double beard,
And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine;
Before him stands the brawn of tusked swine,
And "Nowel!"[1] crieth every lusty man.
Aurelius, in all that ever he can,
Doth to his master cheer and reverence,
And prayeth him to do his diligence,
To bringen him out of his painès smart,
Or with a sword that he would slit his heart.
This subtle clerk such ruth had of this man,
That day and night he speedeth him that he can
To wait a time of his conclusion;
This is to say, to make illusion,
By such an apparence of jugglery,
(I can no termès of astrology)
That she and every wight should ween and say,
That of Bretagne the rockès were away,
Or else they sunken were undér the ground.
So at the last he hath a time yfound
To make his japès[2] and his wretchedness
Of such a superstitious cursedness.
His tables Tolitanès forth he brought,
Full well corrected, that there lackèd nought,
Neither his collect, nor his éxpanse years,
Neither his rootès nor his other gears,
As be his centres and his arguments,
And his proportional convenients
For his equations in every thing:
And by his spherès three in his workíng,

he knew full well how far Alnath[3] was pushed from the head of that fixed Aries above,

[1] Christmas: from the French Noél, "news" of Christ's birth.

[2] Tricks.

[3] The first star in the house of Aries. In 'Chaucer Modernized,' by R. H. Horne and others, there is a curious note on the above passage, supplied by John Varley, the accomplished water-colour painter, who was a firm believer in astrology. Thus it runs:—"In the time of Chaucer, the knowledge of the particular degrees of each sign occupying the cusp, or entrance, of the twelve horoscopal houses, was extremely incorrect. The old tables have been abandoned by modern astrologers (among whom there are several secret students in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge), and are, of course, replaced by perfect tables. The extent of the error may be seen by the computations of Lilly, the celebrated astrologer of King Charles the First's time (who received a grant of a hundred pounds a year from the Parliament); and yet these Lilly tables are now published without correction, though corrected copies may be purchased cheaply. The

That in the fourthè sphere considered is.
Full subtlely he calculèd[1] all this.
When he had found his firstè mansïon
He knew the remnant by proportïon,
And knew the rising of this moonè well,
And in whose face, and term, and every del[2];
And knew full well the moonès mansïon
Accordant to his operatïon;
And knew alsó his other observánces
For such illusïons and such mischances
As heathen folk usèd in thilkè[3] days;
For which no longer maketh he delays,
But through his magic, for a week or tway,[4]
It seemèd that the rockès were away.

Aurelius, who is in doubt whether he shall have his love, or fare but ill, awaiteth night and day for the miracle. And when he knew that there was no obstacle—that the rocks had disappeared every one, he fell anon down at his master's feet, and said—

"I, wretched, woeful Aurelius,
Thankè you, lord, and my Lady Venús,
That me have holpen from my carès cold;"
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,

---

errors ascribed to the science are in truth the errors of calculation. As for the mode of working adopted by the 'clerk' in this poem, we know that the Moon rules in Cancer,—there she has her mansion and her dignities,—and Cancer represents the ocean in the world's horoscope. If the poet has a latent and secondary meaning, then Cancer, in the *mysteries*, is also the popular, and Neptune is public opinion. So far we may follow the 'clerk;' but he subsequently shows himself to be a juggler, and not a worker by regular natural science. He meddles with fixed substances, instead of keeping to calculations and abstract ordinances. For nonentities (in the modern advances of science) have as much power as real things. What is the meridian but a nonentity? Yet the meridian changes the signification of all planetary bodies. Of the Tolitanian tables, constructed by order of Alphonso, King of Naples, it does not appear that Chaucer knew much, nor are they valuable for correctness. But when the learned commentator on Chaucer, Mr. Tyrwhitt, undertakes to prove that the poet, in the opening of his great Prologue, was wrong in saying 'the yonge sonne hath in the *Ram* his half cours yronne,' and that he ought to have said the *Bull*,—the poet turns out to be the best astronomer; for the poet reckoned by the new style, and not the old. The new style was not adopted at that time in England, but Chaucer took it in advance of his time from foreign tables. It was called a 'new style' only when *adopted* in England, but it was not new to Chaucer. He means the first week of April."

[1] Calculated. [2] Every particular. [3] Those. [4] Two.

Whereas he knew he should his lady see.
And when he saw his time, anon right he,
With dreadful[1] heart, and with full humble cheer,
Saluted hath his owen lady dear.
"My sovereign lady," quoth this woful man,
"Whom I most dread and love as I best can,
And loathest were of all this world displease,
N'ere it[2] that I for you have such disease
That I must die here at your foot anon,
Nought would I tell how me is woe-begone.
But certes either must I die or 'plain;
Ye slay me guiltèless for very pain.
But of my death though that ye have no ruth,
Adviseth you, ere that you break your truth:
Repenteth you, for thilkè God above,
Ere ye me slay, because that I you love;
For, madam, well ye wot what ye have hight;[3]
Not that I challenge anything of right
Of you my sovereign lady, but your grace;
But in a garden yond', at such a place,
Ye wot right well what ye behighten[3] me,
And in mine hand your truthè plighten ye
To love me best: God wot ye sayèd so,
All be that I unworthy am thereto.
Madame, I speak it for th' honóur of you,
More than to save my heartès life right now,
I have done so as ye commanded me;
And if ye vouchèsafe, ye may go see.
Do as you list, have your behests in mind,
For quick or dead, right there[4] ye shall me find.
In you li'th all to do me live or dey,
But well I wot the rockès be away."

He taketh his leave, and she astonish'd stood;
In all her facè n' as one drop of blood:
She weenèd never have been in such a trap.
"Alas!" quoth she, "that ever this should hap'!
For weenèd I never by possibility
That such a monster or marvaille might be;
It is against the process of natúre;"
And home she go'th a sorrowful creäture.

For very fear, she can hardly go. For a day or two she continues to weep and wail, and to sorrow, that it was piteous to see,

But why it was, to no wight toldè she,
For out of town was gone Arviragus;
But to herself, she spake, and sayèd thus,

[1] Full of dread. [2] Were it not. [3] Promised.
[4] Right in that matter.

With facè pale, and with full sorry cheer,
In her complaint, as ye shall after hear.
"Alas!" quoth she, "on thee, Fortúne, I 'plain,
That únware hast me wrappèd in thy chain,
From which to scapen wot I no succóur
Save only death, or ellès díshonour:
One of these two behoveth me to choose.
But nathèless, yet had I lever[1] lose
My life, than of my body to have shame,
Or know myselven false, or lose my name:
And with my death I may be quit ywis.
Hath there not many a noble wife ere this,
And many a maiden slain herself, alas,
Rather than with her body do trespass?"

. . . . . .

Thus 'plained Dorigen a day or tway,
Purposing ever that she wouldè dey;
But nathèless upon the thirdè night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And askèd her why that she wept so sore?
And she 'gan weepen ever longér the more.
"Alas," quoth she, "that ever I was born!
Thus have I said," quoth she, "thus have I sworn;"
And told him all, as ye have heard before:
It needeth not rehearse it you no more.
This husband with glad cheer, in goodè wise,
Answer'd and said as I shall you devise:
"Is there ought ellès, Dorigen, but this?"
"Nay, nay," quoth she, "God rede me so, and wis,[2]
This is too much, and it were Goddès will."[3]
"Yea, wife," quoth he, "let sleep that may be still;
It may be well perádventure to-day,
Ye shall your truthè holden by my fay:[4]
For God so wisely have mercy on me
I had well lever[1] stickèd for to be,
For very love which that I to you have,
But if[5] ye should your truthè keep and save.
Truth is the highest thing that men may keep"—[6]
But with that word he 'gan anon to weep,
And said, "I you forbid, on pain of death,
That never while you lasteth life or breath,
To no wight tell thou of this ádventure;
As I may best I will my woe endure.
Ne make no countenance of heaviness
That folk of you may deemen harm or guess."

[1] Rather. [2] Teach, guide.
[3] Or, in other words,—"And if it were but God's will it might be otherwise." [4] Faith. [5] That.
[6] Compare Chaucer's 'Balade of Truth.' In all troubles—
"Truthè shall deliver, it is no dread."

And he called forth a squire and a maiden. "Go forth," he said, "anon with Dorigen, and bring her to such a place immediately.'

They take their leave, and on their way they go,
But they ne wistè why she thither went;
He n'ouldè no wight tellen her intent.

This squire, that was called Aurelius, and that so loved Dorigen, happened by chance to meet her in the town, in the nearest street, as she was bound[1] to go the way towards the garden, where she had given her promise. And he went towards the garden also. For he saw well when she would go out of her house to any kind of place; but there they met through adventure and favour, and he saluteth her with glad intent, and asketh her whither she goes.

And she answérèd, half as she were mad,
"Unto the garden as mine husband bad,
My truthè for to hold, alas! alas!"
Aurelius 'gan wonder on this case,
And in his heart had great compassïon
Of her, and of her lamentatïon,
And of Arviragus, the worthy knight,
That bade her holden all that she had hight,[2]
So loth him was his wife should break her truth;
And in his heart, he caught of this, great ruth,
Considering the best on every side,
That from his lust yet were him lever 'bide,[3]
Than do so high a churlish wretchedness
Against franchïse[4] and allè gentleness;
For which, in fewè wordès said he thus:
"Madáme, say to your lord Arviragus,
That since I see his greatè gentleness
To you, and eke I see well your distréss,
That him were lever have shame (and that were ruth)
Than ye to me should breaken thus your truth,
I had well lever ever to sufferen woe,
Than to depart the love betwïxt you two.
I you release, Madáme, into your hond
Quit every surèment[5] and every bond
That ye have made to me as herebeforn,
Since thilkè timè that ye were yborn.

Have here my truth, I shall never reprove you for any promise; and here I take my leave—

As of the truest and the bestè wife
That ever yet I knew in all my life.

[1] This expression is in common use to this day in Leeds. "Where's t' bound?" is there heard much more frequently than "Where are you going?"
[2] Promised.
[3] Better desist.
[4] The spirit or dignity of freedom.
[5] Assurance, pledge.

But let every wife beware of her promise, remembering, at least, upon Dorigen. Thus, without doubt, a squire can do a gentle deed as well as a knight."

She thanketh him upon her knees all bare,
And home unto her husband is she fare,
And told him all as ye have heard me said,[1]
And, be ye certain, he was so well apaid,
That it were impossíble me to write.

Why should I longer tell of this case? Arviragus and Dorigen, his wife, lead forth their lives in sovereign bliss. Never again was there anger between them.

He cherished her as though she were a queen,
And she was to him true for evermore:
Of these two folk ye get of me no more.
Aurelius, that his cost hath all forlorn,
Curseth the time that ever he was born.
"Alas!" quoth he, "alas! that I behight,[2]
Of purè gold a thousand pound of weight,
Unto this philosópher! how shall I do?

I see no more but that I am undone:—

Mine heritagè must I needès sell,
And be a beggar; here I may not dwell,
And shamen all my kindred in this place,
But[3] I of him may getten better grace;
But nathèless I will of him essay,
At certain dayès, year by year, to pay,
And thank him of his greatè courtesy;
My truthè will I keep; I will not lie."
With heartè sore he go'th unto his coffer,
And broughtè gold unto this philosópher,
The value of five hundred pound, I guess,
And him beseecheth of his gentleness
To grant him dayès of[4] the remenant,
And said: "Mastér, I dare well make avaunt,
I failèd never of my truth as yet;
For sikerly[5] my debtês shall be quit
Towardès you, how so that e'er I fare,
To go a beggar in my kirtle bare.
But would ye vouchèsafe upon surety,
Two years or three for to respiten me,
Then were I well; for ellès must I sell
Mine heritage; there is no more to tell."
This philosópher soberly answér'd,
And savèd thus, when he these wordès heard:

[1] Say. [2] Promised. [3] Unless. [4] For. [5] Certainly.

"Have I not holden covenant to thee?"
"Yea, certes, well and truëly," quoth he.
"Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?"
"No, no," quoth he, and sorrowfully he siketh.[1]
"What was the causè? tell me, if thou can."
Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye have heard before;
It needeth not to you rehearse it more.

He said, "Arviragus, of his gentleness, had rather die in wretchedness and sorrow, than that his wife were false of her troth." He told him all the sorrow of Dorigen; how loth she was to be a wicked wife, and that she had rather that day have died; that she had in innocence sworn her troth, and she had never heard speak of magical appearances. "That," quoth he, "made me have such great pity of her—

And right as freely as he sent her to me,
As freely sent I her to him again.

This is the whole, there is no more to say."

The philosopher answered, "Dear brother, each of you behaved with gentleness to the other. Thou art a squire, and he is a knight; let God, of his blissful power, forbid but that a clerk could do a gentle deed as well as any of you. There is no doubt of that. Sir, I release thee of thy thousand pound as completely as though thou wert but now crept out of the earth and haddest never before known me:—

For, sir, I will not take a penny of thee
For all my craft, ne nought for my travàille;
Thou hast ypayèd well for my victaílle:
It is enough, and farewell, have good day."

And he took his horse, and goes forth on his road.

Lordings, this question I would now ask, Which was the most liberal, think you?

REMARKS ON THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

WHEN the young author of 'Troilus and Cressida' was casting about in his thoughts to see what could be said of his friend and fellow literary labourer, Gower, to whom and to the "philosophical Strode" he wished to dedicate it, we can readily imagine the difficulty that beset him; for it is one that besets all who may have occasion to show their respect for men possessing more ambition than ability, and who owe to the

[1] Sigheth.

accidents of social position, period, etc., a reputation they could not have otherwise obtained. The *poetical* Gower? No; Chaucer could not say *that* of his friend; who, reversing the old fable, turned everything he touched to lead. The *pathetic* Gower? The idea was rather calculated to call up a smile, than to remind him of any of those "unbidden gushes" that ever and anon spring forth amid the rocks and deserts of life at the poet's touch. The *sublime* Gower? Alas! Chaucer would feel, if he did not actually think, that he was getting very near to the ridiculous. He might have certainly called him the *learned* Gower, which would have been almost as great a compliment as to call a literary man of our own day the educated; so common was deep and extensive learning then among the class of writers. There wanted something much more sonorous and imposing, and yet that might mean much or little, according to the views of those who used it. Ha! the *moral* Gower? Excellent! There could be no doubt the good man meant well. He was undoubtedly a very moral Gower. The young poet adopted the phrase.

And such is the strength and vitality of the true, and the weakness of the seeming poet, that while probably not a single reader who glances over these pages will remember a line, or a thought, ever penned by Gower, in all his works, there are perhaps very few persons who are not familiar with his name. The black-letter fly has come safe down to us in Chaucer's amber.

And thus we could be content to let him rest, if there were not considerations of the highest import involved in the question—What value is to be attached to this word, Moral? What was Gower's notion of morality? What was Chaucer's?

In all periods of the world's recorded history (if we except the very remote and dark ones, of which we know too little to make it worth while to take them into account), we find traces of the essential and unchanging principles of religion, philosophy, and morality, around which cling hosts of notions and fancies that do change from age to age, and which may therefore be esteemed as non-essential. Now he will generally be looked upon in his own day as the truly moral writer who most successfully enforces the notions rather than the principles; but the moral writer for all time, we take it, is he who reverses the procedure. Thus in part, we think, may be explained the fact that Gower's morality sleeps in dusty oblivion, while Chaucer's is for ever awakening the hearts and minds of the influential at least among his countrymen, and through them, even where the more direct channels are not open, of the hearts and minds of all the people who own the language his poetry did so much to create.

But Gower, it may be urged in explanation, had not the ability—the mind of a Chaucer—to enable him to work out his views of morality. True ; but that very question of ability should form a capital item in our estimation of the morality of writers. To mean well, and to carry out our meanings, as far as the strength given to us will permit, is all that can be demanded of us as individuals ; but the writer's duty is to teach ; and his power for teaching, as evidenced by the effect of his teaching, should, in a great measure, settle the question of his rank as a moralist. In Chaucer's presence, then, so to speak, how exquisitely absurd and mischievous becomes the honour paid to the *moral* Gower. We crown the lifeless shadow to the neglect of the immortal substance.

Lastly, as to the mode in which the two writers work :—Our spelling-books make Gower's widely known. Jack so-and-so was a bad boy ; he did so-and-so ; mind you don't do that, else *you* will be a bad boy. This is the morality, a little simplified, possibly, of many writers even in our own day, who would be unwilling to acknowledge their offspring in such shape. Their faith is in themselves, not in nature. The facts of life are summarily divided into two classes : the one to be the subject of indignant reprobation, the other of unrespecting eulogy—neither of patient study. This is Gower's method. Chaucer, for the most part, works in a different spirit. Humbly, perseveringly, hopefully, he examines the "mingled yarn" of existence, and discovers good and evil throughout in the closest neighbourhood. He therefore accepts the fact as one upon which all exertions must be based. Looking still more earnestly, the conviction bursts upon him that truth, beauty, goodness, require but a fair field and impartial judge to overthrow all enemies. With deep and solemn joy the poet recognises at last his highest duty. He opens therefore his lists ; the combatants enter ; the passions are let loose ; the subtle brain tries all its wiles ; now high and bright as the heaven above, now low and heavy as the ground beneath, rises and falls the spirit's mood and yearning ; terribly real is the struggle ; the spectators feel there is nothing kept back, that the issue will be indeed momentous, as decisive of the innate strength of the opposing powers ; and lo ! in the shouts, and still better in the tears of gladness with which they at last welcome the issue, they acknowledge, however unconsciously, the mighty influences that have been at work to bear them onward and upward. The poet has become to them the high priest of God. If we do not call Chaucer the "Moral," let it be understood that it is solely because his powers and qualities are too vast and universal to be circumscribed in any one word.

These are the reflections suggested in our mind by the perusal of the foregoing tale. It would be wrong to conceal the fact that there have been different notions of it. Urry sums up the whole thus :—*The scope of this tale seemeth to be a contention of courtesy.*

One may admit to opponents that there are two or three strange omissions in this otherwise very charming story. Supposing the sanctity of an oath was so great at the period in question that neither Dorigen nor her husband could see their way to break loose from it, in spite of the fact that it could only be fraudulently *enforced*, how is it that when Aurelius does at last open his eyes to his own behaviour, as contrasted with theirs, he says nothing about the meanness and wickedness involved in all his former proceedings?

Why, again, it may be asked, did not the husband and wife, who could not be altogether ignorant of the doings of magetours wait to see whether the rocks really were gone before accepting the marvellous appearances as solid fact; and, lastly, how is it that no explanation is given as to the result of the appearances, which must have been soon known only as disappearances, leaving the rocks as before?

We can only answer, Was there ever a story, in prose or verse, of which the lovers' difficulties could not have been avoided by a common-sense dealing with them? Is romance reality? Is fiction fact? To require the story-teller to invent a plot which no detective can unravel, is to mistake his vocation. His business is to tell an interesting story that, like a play, shall take his readers in for the time; not to have it brought into court and examined by a nineteenth century judge, jury, counsel, and expert witnesses. Magic once introduced into a mediæval tale, anything is possible, anything is probable. Into such things readers must not enquire too curiously, even when they pay the author the compliment of taking his fictions for facts.

For analogues of this Tale of Chaucer's, see 'The Damsel's Rash Promise;' Indian and other Asiatic and European versions of the 'Franklin's Tale,' by Mr. Clouston, in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues', pp. 289, 340.

THE PARDONER'S TALE.

IN Flanders once was a company of young folk that haunted the ways of folly,

As riot, hazard, stewès, and tavérnes ;
Whereas[1] with lutès, harpès, and gittérns,
They dance, and play at dice, both day and night,
And eat also, and drink ovér[2] their might ;
Through which they do the devil sacrifice
Within the devil's temple, in cursèd wise,
By superfluity abominable.
Their oathès be so great and so damnáble,
That it is grisly[3] for to hear them swear ;
Our blissful Lordès body they to-tear ;[4]
They thought the Jewès rent him not enough ;

and each of them laughed at the other's sin. And anon there came in dancing-women, small and well made, and young female fruit-sellers, singers with harps, . . . sellers of wafer-cakes, that be the very devil's officers to blow the fire of lust, that is annexed unto gluttony. I take the Holy Writ to witness for me that lust is in wine and drunkenness. . . .

O gluttonyè, full of cursedness ;
O causè first of our confusïon,
Original of our damnatïon,
Till Christ had bought us with his blood again,
Looketh,[5] how dear, and shortly for to sayn
Abought was first this cursèd felony ;
Corrupt was all this world for gluttony.
Adam, our father, and his wife also,
From Paradise, to labour and to woe,
Were driven for that vice, it is no drede ;[6]
For while that Adam fasted, as I read,
He was in Paradise, and when that he
Eat of the fruit defended[7] of a tree,

[1] Whereat. [2] More than they can properly deal with. [3] Fearful.
[4] An augmentation of the force of the verb, tear ; tear to pieces.
[5] Look. [6] No doubt. [7] Forbidden.

He was outcast to woe and into pain:
O gluttony, on thee well ought us 'plain!

Oh, did a man know how many maladies follow excess and gluttonies, he would keep more within measure in his diet, sitting at his table. Alas! the short throat, the tender mouth, make men to labour East, West, North, and South; in earth, in air, in water,

To get a silly glutton meat and drink.

. . . . . .

The apostle Paul saith, piteously weeping, "There walk many, of which I have told you—I say it now, weeping with a piteous voice—that they be enemies of Christ's cross, of whom the end is death. . . .

O Belly, . . .

How great cost and labóur is thee to find!
These cookès how they stamp, and strain, and grind,
And turnen substance into accident,
To fúlfil all thy likerous talént.

Out of the hard bones they knock the marrow, for they cast nought away that may go soft and sweet through the gullet.

Of spicerie, and leavès, bark, and root,
Shall be his saucè made to his delight,
To make him have a newer appetite.

But certainly he that haunteth such delights, who liveth in such vices, is dead. . . .

Drunkenness is full of striving and wretchedness.

Oh, drunken man, disfigured is thy face;
Sour is thy breath, foul art thou to embrace;
And through thy drunken nose soundeth the soun,
As though thou saidest aye,—Sampsoún, Sampsoún.
And yet, God wot, Sampsoún drank never wine.
Thou fallest as it were, a stickèd swine;
Thy tongue is lost, and all thine honest cure![1]
For drunkenness is very sepulture
Of mannès wit, and his discretïon.
In whom that drink hath dominatïon,

without doubt, he can keep no counsel.

Now keep you from the white and from the red,
Namèly[2] from the whitè wine of Lepe,[3]
That is to sell in Fleet Street or in Cheap.

[1] Care or business. [2] Specially.
[3] A place not far from Cadiz, that appears to have been distinguished in Chaucer's time for the strength of its wines.

This Spanish wine creepeth subtlely in other wines growing close by, of which there riseth such fumes, that when a man hath drinken three draughts, and believeth

that he be at home in Cheap,
He is in Spain, right at the town of Lepe,
Not at the Róchelle, ne at Bordeaux town,
And thennè will he say, "Sampsoún, Sampsoún."
But hearken, lordings, one word, I you pray,
That all the sovereign actès, dare I say,[1]
Of victories in th' Oldè Testament,
Thorough the very God Omnipotent,
Were done in abstinence, and in prayére.

Look in the Bible; there ye may learn it.

Look,[2] Attila, the great conqueror, died in his sleep, with dishonour and shame. . . . Remember, too, what was commanded unto Samuel . . . read the Bible, and see the effects of giving wine to them that dispense justice. And now that I have spoken of gluttony, will I forbid hazard to you. Hazard is the very mother of lies and deceit, and false swearing, and blasphemy, and waste of cattle and of time. It is the

contrary of honóur,
For to be held a common hazardour;
And ever the higher he is of estate
The morè he is holden desolate.
If that a princè useth hazardry,
In allè governance and policy,
He is, as by commón opinïon
Heldè the less in reputatïon.
Stilbon, that was a wise ambassadour,
Was sent to Corinth with full great honóur;
From Lacedoine, to make their álliance:
And when he came, it happèd him *perchance*
That all the greatest that were of that lond,
Yplaying at the hazard he them found.
For which, as soon as that it mightè be,
He stole him home again to his country,
And saidè, "There I will not lose my name,
I n'ill not take on me so great defame,
You for to álly unto none hazardours.
Sendeth some other wise ambassadours;
For by my truthè, me were lever die
Than I you should to hazardours ally.

[1] I dare affirm.

[2] The earliest English writers, and Chaucer among them, lost no opportunity of displaying their learning, and very thankful, no doubt, their readers were for the information thus afforded. We are not in the same position, and have, therefore ventured to abridge this luxuriance of book knowledge.

. . . Look, how to King Demetrius the King of Parthius sent in scorn a pair of gold dice. . . . Great swearing is also an abominable thing. The High God forbids it altogether. But now, sirs, I will tell you forth my tale.

These three rioters of whom I speak, long before the bell rang for prime,

> Were set them in a tavern for to drink:
> And as they sat, they heard a bellè clink
> Before a corpse was carried to the grave:
> That one of them 'gan call unto his knave—

"Better go," quoth he, "and ask whose corpse this is that passes by here, and look that thou report his name well." "Sir," quoth the boy, "it needeth never a bit; it was told me two hours before ye came here. He was, pardie, an old companion of yours, and he was slain suddenly to-night. As he sat, from drunkenness, upright on his bench,

> There came a privy thief, men clepen Death,
> That in this country all the people slay'th,
> And with his spear he smote his heart a-two,
> And went his way withouten wordès mo.
> He hath a thousand slain this pestilence:
> And, master, ere ye come in his presénce,
> Me thinketh that it is full necessáry
> For to beware of such an adversary;
> Be ready for to meet him evermore:
> Thus taughtè me my dame; I say no more."
> "By Saintè Mary," said this Tavernere,[1]
> "The child saith sooth, for he[2] hath slain this year,
> Hence over a mile, within a great villáge,
> Both man and woman, child, and hind, and page;
> I trow his habitatïon be there:
> To be advisèd, great wisdóm it were,
> Ere that he did a man that díshonour."
> "Yea, Goddès armès," quoth this riotour,
> "Is it such peril with him for to meet?
> I shall him seek by way and eke by street.
> I make a vow to Goddès dignè[3] bones.

Hearken, fellows, we three be but as one.

> Let each of us hold up his hand to other,
> And each of us becomen other's brother,
> And we will slay this falsè traitor Death:
> He shall be slainè that so many slay'th,
> By Goddès dignity, ere it be night!"
> Together have these three their trothès plight,

[1] The innkeeper. [2] Death. [3] Worthy.

To live and dien each of them with other,
As though he were his owèn swornè brother.
And up they start, all drunken, in this rage,
And forth they go towardès that villáge,
Of which the Taverner hath spoke beforn.
And many a grisly oath then have they sworn,
And Christès blessed body they to-rent;
"Death shall be dead, if that we may him hent."[1]
When they have gone not fully half a mile,
Right as they would have turn'd ovér a stile,
An old man and a poorè with them met;
This oldè man full meekèly them grette,[2]

and said, "Now, lords, God keep you in his sight!"

The proudest of the three rioters answered again, "What! churl with sorry cheer! Why art thou so wrapped up, except thy face?

Why livest thou so long in so great age?"
This oldè man 'gan look in his[3] viságe,
And saidè thus: "For that I cannot find
A man, though that I walkèd into Inde,
Neither in city none, ne in villáge,
That wouldè change his youthè for mine age;
And therefore must I have mine agè still
As longè time as it is Goddès will.
And Death, alas! ne will not have my life.
Thus walk I like a restèless caitíff,
And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,
I knockè with my staff, early and late,
And sayè, 'Levè[4] mother, let me in;
Lo, how I wanè, flesh, and blood, and skin.
Alas! when shall my bonès be at rest?
Mother, with you will I changén my chest,
That in my chamber longè time hath been:

Yea, for a hair cloth, in which to wrap myself. But yet she will not do me that favour, therefore is my face full pale and withered.

But, sirs, it is no courtesy in you to speak villainous words unto an old man, unless he trespass in word or deed. In Holy Writ ye may yourselves see, that you should rise in respect before an old man, whose head is hoar; thereof I counsel you, do unto an old man no harm, nor

No morè than ye would men did to you
In age, if that ye may so long abide.
And God be with you, whereso ye go or ride!
I must go thither as I have to go.

[1] Catch. [2] Greeted. [3] In his (the rioter's). [4] Dear.

"Nay, oldè churl, by God thou shalt not so!"
Saidè that other hazardour anon;
"Thou partest not so lightly, by Saint John.
Thou spake right now of thilkè traitor Death,
That in this country all our friendès slay'th.

Have here my truth, that thou art his spy. Tell me where he is, or thou shalt abide the consequences,

By God and by the Holy Sacrament!
For soothly thou art one of his assent
To slay us youngè folk, thou falsè thief."

"Now, sirs," quoth he, "if it be so pleasant to you to find Death,

turn up this crooked way,
For in that grove I left him, by my fay,
Under a tree, and there he will abide;
Ne for your boast he n'ill him nothing hide.
See ye that oak? right there ye shall him find;
God savè you that bought again mankind,
And you amend;" thus said this oldè man.
And every of these riotourès ran
Till they came to the tree, and there they found
Of florins fine of gold ycoinèd round,
Well nigh a seven bushels, as them thought.
No longer thennè after Death they sought,
But each of them so glad was of that sight,
For that the florins were so fair and bright,
That down they set them by that precious hoard.
The youngest of them spake the firstè word:
"Brethren," quoth he, "take keep what I shall say;
My wit[1] is great, though that I bourde[2] and play.
This treasure hath fortúnè to us given
In mirth and jollity our life to liven,
And lightly as it comes, so will we spend.
Aye, Goddès precious dignity, who wend[3]
To-day, that we should have so fair a grace?
But might this gold be carried from this place
Home to mine house, or ellès unto yours,
(For well I wot that this gold is not ours),
Then weren we in high felicity.
But truëly by day it may not be;
Men wouldè say that we were thievès strong,

and for our treasure hang us. This treasure must be carried by night, as wisely and slily as possible, therefore I advise that we cast lots among us, and see where the lot will fall. And he that hath the lot, shall run with blithe heart to the town, and that full quickly,

[1] Knowledge. [2] Make fun, from the French. [3] Believed.

To bring us bread and wine full privily:
And two of us shall keepen subtilely
This treasure well; and if he will not tarry,
When it is night, we will this treasure carry
By one assent, there as us liketh best."

Then one of them brought the straws in his fist, and bade them draw, and look where the lot would fall, and it fell on the youngest of them.

And forth toward the town he went anon.
And all so soonè that he was agone,
That one of them spake thus unto that other:
"Thou wottest well thou art my swornè brother,
Thy profit will I tellè thee anon.
Thou wottest well our fellow is agone,
And here is gold, and that full great plenty
That shall departed[1] be among us three.
But nathèless, if I can shape it so,
That it departed were betwix us two,
Had I not done a friendès turn to thee?"
The other answered, "I n'ot[2] how that may be:
He wot well that the gold is with us tway,
What should we then do? what should we say?"

"Shall it be in confidence?" said the first wretch.

"And I shall tellen thee in wordès few
What we shall do, and bring it well about."
"I grantè," quoth that other, "without doubt,
That by my troth I will thee not betray."
"Now," quoth the first, "thou wot'st well we be tway,
And two of us shall stronger be than one.
Look, when that he is set, thou right anon
Arise, as though thou wouldèst with him play,
And I shall rive him through the sidès tway
While that thou strugglest with him as in game;
And with thy dagger look thou do the same;
And then shall all this gold departed[1] be,
My dearè friend, betwixen thee and me;
Then mayen we our lustès all fulfil,
And play at dice right at our owen will."

And thus agreed be these two cursed wretches to slay the third.

This youngest, which that wentè to the town,
Full fast in heart he rolleth up and down
The beauty of the florins new and bright.
"O Lord!" quoth he, "if so were, that I might

[1] Parted, divided. [2] Know not.

Have all this gold unto myself alone,
There is no man that liveth under the throne
Of God, that shouldè live so merry as I."
And at the last, the fiend, our enemy,
Put in this thought that he should poison bey,[1]
With which he mightè slay his fellows tway.

For why? the fiend found him living in such a manner, that he had leave to bring him to sorrow. And this was his determined purpose,

To slay them both and never to repent.
And forth he go'th, no longer would he tarry,
Into the town unto a 'pothecary,
And praydè him that he him wouldè sell
Some poison

that he might exterminate his rats. And also there was a polecat in his farm-yard that he said had slain his capons, and if he could he would gladly be revenged on the vermin that destroyed them by night.

The apothecary answered, "As wisely as may God save my soul, shalt have a thing that there is not a living creature in all the world that hath eaten or drunken of this confection but the amount of a corn of wheat, that he shall not anon give up his life. Yea, he shall perish in less time than thou wilt go a mile, the poison is so strong and violent."

This cursed man hath seized in his hand the poison in a box, and immediately he ran into the next street, and borrowed three large bottles, and he poured the poison into two of them, and kept the third clean for his own drink : for all the night he determined to labour in carrying the gold away out of that place.

And when this rioter with sorry grace
Hath filled with wine his greatè bottles three,
To his fellows again repaireth he.
What needeth it thereof to sermon more ?
For right as they had cast[2] his death before,
Right so they have him slain, and that anon.
And when this was ydone, thus spake that one :
"Now let us drink and sit, and make us merry,
And afterward we will his body bury."
And with that word it happened him *per cas*[3]
To take the bottle there the poison was
And drank, and gave his fellow drink also,

from which, anon, they both perished.

[1] Buy. [2] Contrived. [3] By chance.

REMARKS ON THE PARDONER'S TALE.

IN the story of Death and the Rioters occurs another evidence of Chaucer's power of steeping the most unfamiliar and difficult subjects in their own kindred hues. As with the chief actors or mainspring of the machinery of the poem, so with its whole atmosphere—everything looks natural, and explicable upon natural principles; yet you feel surrounded by strange, solemn, unearthly influences, that seem to rise far into the region of the supernatural. The surpassing skill with which this is accomplished can only be felt, not described. Yet let us ask, does the poet make the Taverner's boy believe Death came bodily, and smote in two with his spear the heart of the drunken rioter on the bench?—or make the Taverner himself believe Death's bodily habitation is in the village a mile distant, where he hath slain this year

> Both man and woman, child, and hind, and page?

or make the adventurous rioters expect to encounter him face to face? Does he mean that this Old Man they meet with is really DEATH, who while going about on his terrible mission of giving rest to others, can find none for himself, and cries out with the sublimest pathos,

> Ne Death, alas! ne will not have my life.
> Thus walk I like a restèless caitíff;
> And on the ground *which is my mother's gate*,
> I knockè with my staff, early and late,
> And sayè, Levè mother, let me in!

And if this be DEATH, is it he who has laid the florins at the tree's root to entrap the wretched boasters? Who can answer? None of these things need to be so to support the mere human vitality of the tale; yet how every line and touch makes us believe the tale is instinct with a higher life, and opens to us dim, undefinable glimpses of the world beyond, into which its course conducts the three human and erring actors.

Descending from such speculations, the dramatic construction of this talè must strike every one. In simplicity and grandeur of design, in the depth and universality of the sympathies aroused, and in the metaphysical truth and rapidity with which one movement springs out of another, each enlarging upon its predecessor, and hurrying on faster and faster to the

complete and awful conclusion, it must be looked upon as one of the most perfect things of the kind in existence.

Some people have been foolish and presumptuous enough to think that Chaucer did not know what he was about in the introduction to this Tale. How improper, say they, is such a Tale in the mouth of the Pardoner! They forget that it is his business to tell Moral Tales—and that he expressly says he tells all such things by *rote*. And how artistically, as well as humorously, does Chaucer prepare for this Tale, by making the grasping, licentious, sensual, shameless vagabond, after revelling in his own self-exposure, begin to lecture his audience upon the wickedness of avarice, drunkenness, and gluttony; even the little lengthening—the tediousness—here has its purpose; until the mirth at the contrast being, as we may suppose, literally exhausted, the Pardoner, who is used to laughter and contempt, and "likes it," probably, and at all events is not disconcerted by it—at once launches into his Tale; which by its own power speedily arrest all hearts and minds—and inspires even the narrator with a professional sobriety and earnestness befitting the occasion.

The earliest known version of the 'Pardoner's' Tale dates from the fifth century before Christ, and was found by Dr. R. Morris among the Buddhist Jatakas, or birth-stories. It is known in other versions in Persian, Arabian, Kashmiri, Tibetan, Latin, Italian, German, French, and Portuguese; and accounts of these will be found in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues,' pp. 417, 436, 131-4.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

O LORD our Lord! thy name how marvellous
Is in this argè world yspread! (quoth she)
For not onlý thy laudè precïous
Performèd is by men of high degree,
But by mouthès of children thy bountý
Performèd is; on the breast suckíng,
Some timè showen they thine herying.[1]

Wherefore in laud, as I can best or may,
Of thee, and of thy whitè lily flower
Which that thee bare, and is a maid alwáy,
To tell a tale I will do my labóur;
Not that I may increasen her honóur,
For she herselven is honóur and root
Of bounty, next her son, and soulès boot.[2]

O mother maid! O maidè mother free!
O bush unburnt! burning in Moses' sight,
That ravishedst down from the deity,
Through thine humblèss,[3] the ghost[4] that in thee 'light;
Of whose virtúe, he in thine heartè pight,[5]
Conceivèd was the father's sapience,[6]
Help me to tell it in thy reverence!

Lady! thy bounty, thy magnificence,
Thy virtue and thy great humility,
There may no tongue express in no sciénce;
For some time, Lady! ere men pray to thee,
Thou goest before of thy benignity,
And gettest us the light through thy prayére,
To guiden us unto thy Son so dear.

My conning[7] is so weak, O blissful queen!
For to declare thy greatè worthiness,
That I may not this in my wit sustain;
But as a child of twelve months old or less,
That can unnethès[8] any word express,

[1] Praise. [2] Help. [3] Humility. [4] Spirit. [5] Pitched.
[6] Wisdom. [7] Skill. [8] Scarcely, with difficulty.

Right so fare I, and therefore I you pray,
Guideth my song that I shall of you say.

There was in Asia, in a great city, among Christian folks, a Jewery, sustained by a lord of that land for the sake of foul usury and villainous lucre. It was very hateful to Christ and to his company. Through the street men might ride and go, for it was free and open at either end.

A little school of Christian folk there stood,
Down at the farther end, in which there were
Children a heap, comen of Christian blood,
That learnèd in that schoolè year by year
Such manner doctrine as men usèd there;
This is to say, to singen and to read,
As smallè children do in their childhede.

Among these children was a widow's son, a little clerk, seven years of age, that was accustomed to go day by day to school; and he was taught, also, wherever he saw the image of Christ's mother,—

to kneel adown, and say
Avè Maria, as he go'th by the way.

Thus hath this widow her little child ytaught,
Our blissful Lady, Christès mother dear,
To worship aye, and he forgot it nought;
For seely[1] child will alway soonè lere.[2]
But aye, when I remember of this mattére,
Saint Nicholas[3] stands ever in my presénce,
For he so young to Christ did reverence.

This little child, his little book learníng,
As he sat in the school at his primére,
O Alma Redemptoris[4] heardè sing,
As children learnèd their antiphonere;[5]
And as he durst he drew him near and near,[6]
And hearkened ever the wordès and the note,
Till he the firstè verse could[7] all by rote.

Nought wist he what this Latin was to say,
For he so young and tender was of age;

[1] Blessed. [2] Learn.

[3] An amusing old Legend says, "This man's holiness, even as in future time it would be, appeared in the very cradle. For whereas the infant on each of the other week-days sucked of the nurse's milk again and again; he, on the fourth and the sixth (Wednesdays and Fridays), being days of abstinence, abstained, and sucked but once, and that at eventide." No wonder such a child became subsequently the Patron Saint of Children.

[4] O benign (mother) of the Redeemer.

[5] Antiphones (our Anthems). Chanting alternate verses of the Psalms.

[6] Nigher and nigher. [7] Knew.

But on a day his fellow 'gan he pray
To expound him this song in his language,
Or tell him what this song was in usage.
This pray'd he him to construe and declare,
Full often time upon his kneës bare.

His fellow, which that elder was than he,
Answered him thus: "This song, I have heard say,
Was makèd of our blissful Lady free,
Her to salute, and eke her for to pray
To be our help and succour when we dey;[1]
I can no more expound in this mattére,
I learnè song; I can no more grammére."

"And is this song made in reverence of Christ's mother?" said this innocent. "Now, certes, I will with diligence learn it all ere Christenmass be gone. Although that for my primer I shall be punished, and shall be beaten thrice in an hour, I will learn it in order to honour our Lady."

His fellow taught him homeward privily
From day to day till he could[2] it by rote;
And then he sang it well and boldèly,
From word to word according to the note.
Twice on the day it passèd through his throat
To schoolèward and homeward when he went;
On Christès mother set was his intent.

As I have said, throughout the Jewèry
This little child, as he came to and fro,
Full merrily then would he sing and cry,
O Alma Redemptoris! ever mo'.
The sweetness hath his heartè piercèd so,
Of Christès mother, that to her to pray
He cannot stint of singing by the way.

Our first foe, the serpent Sathanas, that hath his wasps' nest in Jew's heart, up swelled, and said, "O Hebrew people, alas! is this to you an honest thing, that such a boy shall walk as he pleases in your despite, and sing of such matter, which is against the reverence due to our law?"

From thenceforth the Jews conspired to chase this innocent out of the world. They have hired a homicide that had a privy place in an alley, and as the child began to pass thereby, the cursed Jew seized him and held him fast, and cut his throat and cast him in a pit.

. . . . . .

This poorè widow waiteth all that night
After her little child, but he comes nought,
For which as soon as it was dayès light,

[1] Die. [2] Knew.

With facè pale in dread, and busy thought,
She hath at school and éllès where him sought,
Till finally she 'gan of him espy
That he was last seen in the Jewèry.

With mother's pity in her breast enclosed,
She go'th, as she were half out of her mind,
To every placè where she hath supposed
By likelihood her childè for to find ;
And ever on Christès mother, meek and kind,
She cried, and at the lastè thus she wrought,
Among the cursed Jewès she him sought.

She asketh and she prayeth piteously to every Jew that dwelled in that place to tell if her child went aught by there. They said, "Nay." But Jesus, of his grace, gave her to think, within a short time, that her son was cast in a pit beside the place where she cried for him.

O greatè God, that pérformest thy laud
By mouth of innocents, lo here thy might !
This gem of chastity, this emeraud,[1]
And eke of martyrdom the ruby bright,
There[2] he with throat ycarven lay upright,
He *Alma Redemptoris* 'gan to sing,
So loud, that all the place began to ring.

The Christian folk that through the streetè went,
In comen for to wonder on this thing,
And hastily they for the provost sent.
He came anon withouten tarrying
And herieth[3] Christ, that is of heaven king,
And eke his mother, honour of mankínd,
And after that the Jewès let[4] he bind.

This child, with piteous lamentatïon,
Up taken was, singing his song alwáy,
And with honóur of great procession,
They carried him unto the next abbéy,
His mother swooning by the bierè lay.
Unnèthes might[5] the people that were there,
This newè Rachael bringen from the bier.

With torment, and a shameful death, the provost causes each one of these Jews to perish that knew of the murder, and he did it immediately. He would pay no respect to such wretches.

Evil shall have, that evil will deserve ;
Therefore with wildè horse he did them draw,
And after that he hung them by the law.

[1] Emerald. [2] Where. [3] Blesses, praises.
[4] Caused to be bound. [5] Scarcely were the people able.

Upon his bier aye li'th this innocent
Before the altar whiles the massè last;
And after that, the abbot with his convént
Have sped them for to bury him full fast;
And when they holy water on him cast,
Yet spake this child, when sprentet[1] was the water,
And sang *O Alma Redemptoris Mater!*

This abbot, which that was a holy man,
(As monkès be, or ellès ought to be),
This youngè child to cónjure he began,
And said: "Oh dearè child! I halsè[2] thee
In virtue of the holy Trinity;
Tell me what is thy causè for to sing,
Since that thy throat is cut, to my seemíng?

"My throat is cut to the neck-bone," said the child; "and naturally I should have died—yea, a long time ago, but Jesus Christ, as you find in books, wills that his glory lasts, and be remembered;

And for the worship of his mother dear,
Yet may I sing *O Alma* loud and clear.
This well of mercy, Christès mother sweet,
I loved alwáy, as after my conníng;[3]

And when that I should give up my life, she came to me and bade me for to sing this anthem in my death, as ye have heard:

and when that I had sung,
Methought she laid a grain undér my tongue.

Wherefore I sing, and singè must certáin,
In honour of that blissful maiden free,
Till from my tonguè taken is the grain.
And after that thus saidè she to me:
'My little child, now will I fetchen thee,
When that the grain is from thy tongue ytake;
Be not aghast, I will thee not forsake.'"

This holy monk, this abbot, him mean I,
His tongue out caught, and took away the grain,
And he gave up the ghost full softèly.
And when this abbot had this wonder sayn,[4]
His salte tearès striken[5] down as rain;

and suddenly he fell flat upon the ground, and lay still, as though he had been in bonds.

[1] Sprinkled.
[2] Literal meaning, "embrace round the neck"—from the Saxon *hals*, neck. The abbot uses it as an affectionate conjuration.
[3] According to my knowledge. [4] Seen. [5] Trickled.

The convent lay upon the pavement, weeping and thanking Christ's dear mother. And after that they rose and went forth, and took away their martyr from his bier; and in a tomb of clear marble stones they enclosed his little sweet body. There he is now, God incline us to meet him in heaven.

O youngè Hugh of Lincoln! slain alsó
With cursed Jewès, as it is notáble,
For it is but a little while ago.
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,
That of his mercy God so merciáble
On us his greatè mercy multiply
For reverence of his mother Mary. *Amen.*

REMARKS ON THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

WHETHER the barbarous treatment of the Jews by Christians during the middle ages ever produced in its reaction so monstrous and apparently incredible a crime as that of the crucifixion of a Christian child, it is difficult to determine now; but it is certain that the belief was widely spread, and equally certain that whole hecatombs of Jews suffered on the scaffold for their alleged guilt.

The particular murder spoken of by the Prioress in the last verse was recorded by Matthew Paris, who states that in the 29th year of Henry III. (A.D. 1244-5) eighteen Jews were brought to London from Lincoln, and hanged for crucifying a child eight years old. The child, Hugh, was buried with great pomp in Lincoln Cathedral, and canonized. A very rich and costly shrine was also erected over the remains. Henry VIII. swept this away with all the other treasures of the Cathedral, and nothing more important than a piece of raised stone in the southern aisles of the choir subsequently marked the spot.

A still more interesting and durable memorial, however, exists in an old ballad, which we transcribe from the Percy Reliques. The Editor remarks,—

"The following ballad is probably built upon some Italian Legend, and bears a great resemblance to the 'Prioress's Tale' in Chaucer; the poet seems also to have had an eye to the well-known story of Hugh of Lincoln, a child said to have been there murthered in the reign of Henry III. The conclusion of this ballad appears to be wanting; what it probably contained may be seen in Chaucer. As for Mirry-land Toune, it is probably a corruption of Milan (called by the Dutch Meylandt)

Town ; the Pa is evidently the river Po, although the Adige, not the Po, runs through Milan."—*Printed from a MS. Copy sent from Scotland.*

The rain rins doun through Mirry-land toune,
Sae dois it doune the Pa :
Sae dois the lads of Mirry-land toune
Quhan they play at the ba'.

Then out and cam the Jewis dochtér,
Said, "Will ye cum in and dine ? "
"I winnae cum in, I cannae cum in,
Without my play-feres nine."

Scho pou'd an apple reid and white
To intice the zong thing in :
Scho pou'd an apple white and reid,
And that the sweit bairne did win.

And scho has taine out a little pen-knife,
And low down by her gair,
Scho has twin'd the zong thing and his life ;
A word he never spak mair.

And out and cam the thick thick bluid,
And out and cam the thin ;
And out and cam the bonny hert's bluid ;
Thair was nae life left in.

Scho laid him on a dressing borde,
And drest him like a swine,
And laughing said, "Gae now and play
With zour sweit play-feres nine."

Scho rowd him in a cake of lead,
Bade him lie still and sleip.
Scho cast him in a deip draw-well,
Was fifty fadom deip.

Quhan bells wer rung, and mass was sung,
And every lady went hame ;
Then ilka lady had her zong sonne,
But Lady Helen had nane.

Scho rowd hir mantil hir about,
And sair sair gan she weip ;
And she ran into the Jewis castél,
Quhan they were all asleip.

"My bonny Sir Hew, my pretty Sir Hew,
I pray thee to me speik."
"O lady, rin to the deep draw-well
Gin ze zour sonne wad seik."

Lady Helen ran to the deip draw-well,
And knelt upon her kne :
"My bonny Sir Hew, and ze be here,
I pray thee speik to me."

"The lead is wondrous heavy, mither,
The well is wondrous deip,
A keen penknife sticks in my hert ;
A word I dounae speik.

Gae hame, gae hame, my mither deir,
Fetch me my winding sheet,
And at the back o' Mirry-land toune
Its thair we twa sall meet."

. . . . .

This is an affecting composition, but we miss in it not only the coherence of Chaucer's tale, but the exquisite touches he ever throws in, even in his least important works. What a lovely picture, for instance, is that of the child, singing his *Alma Redemptoris* ever with fresh enjoyment, as he goes along the street! The sweetness of Christ's mother has so pierced his heart, says the Prioress,

that to her to pray
He cannot stint of singing by the way.

In the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues,'[1] are two verse stories like the 'Prioress's Tale,' *i.e.* French, of the 13th century, of an English school-boy killed by a Jew for singing *Gaude Maria;* 2. English, of the 14th century, of a Paris beggar-boy murdered by a Jew for singing an anthem of our Lady, *Alma Redemptoris Mater.*

[1] Pp. 253-285.

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE.

POOR widow, somewhat bent, in age,
Was whilome[1] dwelling in a poor cottáge,
Beside a grovè standing in a dale.
This widow, of which I tellè you my tale,
Since thilkè day that she was last a wife,
In patïence led a full simple life,
For little was her cattle and her rent.
By husbandry of such as God her sent,
She found[2] herself, and eke her daughters two.
Three largè sowès had she, and no mo';
Three kine, and eke a sheep that hightè[3] Mall.
Full sooty was her bower, and eke her hall,
In which she ate full many a slender meal.
Of poignant sauce her needed never a deal;[4]
No dainty morsel passèd through her throat.
Her diet was accordant to her cote.
Repletïon ne made her never sick;
Temperate diet was all her physíc;
And exercise, and heartès suffisance.[5]
The goutè let[6] her nothing for to dance;
The apoplexy[7] shentè not her head.
No wine ne drank she, neither white nor red.
Her board was servèd most with white and black,—
Milk, and brown bread, in which she found no lack,
Singed bacon, and sometimes an egg or two:

for she was as it were a kind of labourer.

A yard she had, enclosèd all about
With stickès, and a drïè ditch without,
In which she had a cock hight Chanticleer.

In all the land there was not his equal for crowing. His voice was merrier than the merry organ that goes on mass days

[1] Once, formerly. [2] Kept. [3] Was called. [4] Never a bit.
[5] Sufficiency or contentedness of heart. [6] Hindered.
[7] Seized—injured not.

in the churches. More certain was his crowing in his lodging than is a clock or an abbey horologe. He knew naturally each ascension of the equinoctial in that town; for when fifteen degrees were risen, then he crowed so well that it could not be exceeded.

His comb was redder than the fine corál,
And 'battled as it were a castle wall;
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
Like azure were his leggès and his toen;[1]
His nailès whiter than the lily flower,
And like the burnish'd gold was his coloúr.

This gentle cock had in his government seven hens, his sisters or wives, and wondrously like to him in colours,

Of which the fairest huëd in her throat
Was clepèd[2] fair Damóselle Partelote.
Courteous she was, discreet, and debonair,

and sociable, and bare herself so well since the day since she was sevennight old, that truly she hath in possession the heart of Chanticleer:

He loved her so, that well was him therewith.
But such a joy it was to hear them sing,
When that the brightè sun began to spring,
In sweet accord, "My life is fair in land."[3]

For at that time, as I have understood, beasts and birds could speak and sing. And it so befell that in a dawning

As Chanticleer among his wivès all
Sat on his perchè that was in the hall,
And next him sat this fairè Partelote,
This Chanticleer gan groanen in his throat,

as a man that in his dream is sorely oppressed.

And when that Partelot thus heard him roar,
She was aghast, and saidè, "Heartè dear!
What aileth you to groan in this mannére?
Ye be a very sleeper, fye for shame!"

And he said in answer, "I pray you not to take it in sorrow. By G—, I dreamed I was in such mischief, just now, that mine heart is yet sorely affrighted. Now God," quoth he, "direct my dream rightly, and keep my body out of foul prison. I dreamed

how that I roamèd up and down
Within our yard, whereas I saw a beast,
Was like a hound, and would have made arrest

[1] Toes. [2] Called. [3] Most probably a well-known song.

Upon my body, and have had me dead.
His colour was betwixt yellów and red;
And tippèd was his tail and both his ears
With black, unlike the remnant of his hairs;
His snout was small, with glowing eyen tway;
Yet of his look for fear I almost dey.[1]

This without doubt caused me to groan."
"Away!" quoth Partelote; "fie on you, heartless."

"Alas," quoth she, "for by that God above,
Now have ye lost my heart and all my love:
I cannot love a coward, by my faith.
For certès, what so any woman saith,
We all desiren, if it mightè be,
To have husbandès, hardy, rich, and free,
And secret, and no niggard, ne no fool,
Nor him that is aghast of every tool[2];

nor no boaster, by the God in heaven.

How durst ye say for shame unto your love
That any thing might maken you afeard?
Have ye no mannès heart, and have a beard?

Alas! and can ye be aghast of dreams! Nothing but vanity, God knows, is there in dreaming. Dreams are engendered

of repletïons
And oft of fume, and of complexïons,
When humours be too abundant in a wight.
Certes this dream which ye have met[3] to night
Cometh of the great superfluity
Of yourè reddè cholera, parde;

which causeth folk to dread in their dreams of arrows, and of fire with red flames, of red beasts that will bite them, of contests, and of wasps, great and little; just as the humour of melancholy causeth many a man to cry in his sleep, for fear of bulls, and of black bears, or else black devils, that will take them.

Of other humours could I tell alsó,
That worken many a man in sleep full woe;
But I will pass as lightly as I can.
Lo Cato, which that was so wise a man,
Saith hę not thus,—Ne do no force[4] of dreams?
Now sir, quoth she, when we fly from the beams,
For goddès love, as take some laxatife.
Up' peril of my soul and of my life,

[1] Die. [2] Weapon. [3] Dreamed. [4] Take no heed.

I counsel you the best, I will not lie,
That both of choler and melancholy
Ye purgè you; and for ye shall not tarry,
Though in this town is no apothecary,
I shall myself two herbès teachen you
That shall be for your heal

and for your profit. And in our yard I shall find the herbs which have naturally the property to purge you. . . .

Forget not this for Goddès owne love;
Ye be full choleric of complexïon;
'Warè[1] the sun in his ascensïon
Ne find you not replete in humours hot;
And if it do, I dare well lay a groat,
That ye shall have a fever tertïan,
Or else an ague, that may be your bane.
A day or two, ye shall have digestives
Of wormès, ere ye take your laxatives
Of laureole, centaury, and fumetere,
Or else of hellebore that groweth there,
Of catapucè, or of gaitre berries,[2]
Or herb ivy, growing in our yard, that merry is;
Peck them up, right as they grow, and eat them in;
Be merry, husband, for your father kin,
Dreadeth no dreamès: I can say no more."
"Madáme," quoth he, "*grand mercy* of your lore;
But nathèless, as touching Dan Catoun,
That hath of wisdom such a great renown:
Though that he bade no dreamès for to dread,
By God, men may in oldè bookès read
Of many a man more of authority
Than ever Cato was—

So may I thrive,—that say all the reverse of this;

And have well founden by experïence,
That dreamès be significatïons,
As well of joy as tribulatïons,
That folk enduren in this life presènt.
There needeth make of this no argument,

the very trial sheweth it truly.

One of the greatest authors that men read, [Cicero,] saith that once two friends

went
On pilgrimage in a full good intent;
And happened so they came into a town
Whereas there was such congregatïoun

[1] Beware.

[2] Catapuce is a kind of spurge; gaitre berries are the berries of the dog-wood.

Of people, and eke so strait of herbergage,[1]
That they found not as much as a cottáge,
In which that they might both ylodgèd be;
Wherefore they musten of necessity,
As for that night, departen company,
And each of them go'th to his hostelry,
And took his lodging as it wouldè fall.
That one of them was lodged in a stall,
Far in a yard, with oxen of the plough;
That other man was lodgèd well enow,
As was his ádventure or his fortúne,

that commonly governs us all.

And so befell that, long ere it were day,
This man met[2] in his bed, there as he lay,
How that his fellow gan upon him call,
And said, 'Alas! for in an ox's stall
This night I shall be murdered there I lie.
Now help me, dearè brother! or I die:
In allè hastè come to me,' he said.
This man out of his sleep for fear abraid;[3]
But when that he was wakèd out of sleep
He turnèd him, and took of this no keep;
Him thought his dream was but a vanity.
Thus twïes in his sleeping dreamèd he.

And at the third time his companion came, as he thought, and said, 'Now I am slain;

Behold my bloody woundès deep and wide.
Arise up early in the morrow tide,
And at the west gate of the town (quoth he)
A cartè full of dung there shalt thou see,
In which my body is hid full privily;

boldly arrest that cart. My gold, truth to say, caused my murder. And he told him every point how he was slain,

With a full piteous facè, pale of hue.
And trusteth well, his dream he found full true;
For on the morrow, as soon as it was day,
To his fellowès inn he took his way.
And when that he came to this ox's stall,
After his fellow he began to call.
The hostèler answérèd him anon,
And saidè, 'Sir, your fellow is agone;
As soon as day he went out of the town.'

This man began to fall in suspicion, remembering what he

[1] So straitened for lodging-room. [2] Dreamed. [3] Started.

had dreamed, and forth he goes—no longer would he delay—unto the west gate of the town, and found a dung cart, as it went to manure land,

> That was arrayèd in the samè wise
> As ye have heard the deadè man devise;
> And with a hardy heart he gan to cry—
> 'Vengeance and justice of this felony!
> My fellow murdered is this samè night,
> And in this cart he li'th gapìng upright.[1]
> I cry out on the ministers (quoth he)
> That shouldè keep and rulen this city:
> Harow! alas! here li'th my fellow slain!'

Why should I say more of this tale? The people rushed out, and cast the cart to the ground, and in the middle of the dung they discovered the man, newly murdered.

> O blissful God! thou art full just and true,
> Lo, how that thou betrayest murder alwáy:
> Murder will out: . . .

Murder is so loathsome and abominable to God, who is reasonable and just, that he will not suffer it to be buried.

> Though it abide a year, or two, or three,
> Murder will out; this is my conclusion.

And immediately the ministers of the place have seized the carter, and so sorely tortured him, and also so sorely racked the hostler, that they acknowledged their wickedness, and were hanged by the neck.

Here ye may see that dreams are to be dreaded; and certainly I read in the same book, in the very next chapter (I talk not idly—so may I have joy and bliss)—

> Two men that would have passèd over sea,
> For certain causes, into far country,
> If that the wind ne haddè been contráry;
> That made them in a city for to tarry,
> That stood full merry upon a haven side.
> But on a day, against the even-tide,
> The wind 'gan change, and blew right as they lest.[2]
> Jolly and glad they wenten unto rest,
> And casten[3] them full early for to sail;
> But to that one man fell a great marvàille:

He, as he lay sleeping, dreamed a wondrous dream,

> Him thought a man stood by his beddès side
> And him commanded that he should abide,
> And said him thus; 'If thou to-morrow wend,[4]

thou shalt be drowned.'

[1] On his back. [2] Desired. [3] Planned. [4] Depart.

He woke, and told his fellow what he had dreamed, and prayed him to delay his voyage; he prayed him to remain but for that day.

His fellow that lay by his beddès side
'Gan for to laugh, and scornèd him full fast:
'No dream,' quoth he, 'may so my heart aghast[1]

that I will delay to do my business. I care not a straw for thy dreamings. Dreams are but vanities and tricks. Men dream all day of owls and apes, and also of many a bewildering fancy. Men dream of things that were not, nor shall be. But since I see that thou wilt here stay, and thus for sloth wilfully lose thy tide, God knows I am sorry for it. Have good day!'

And thus he took his leave, and went his way.
But ere he haddè half his course ysailèd,
N'ot I not why,[2] ne what mischance it ailèd,
But casually the shippès bottom rent,
And ship and man under the water went,
In sight of other shippès there beside,
That with him sailèd at the samè tide.
And therefore fairè Partelot so dear,
By such examples oldè may'st thou lere[3]
That no man shouldè be so reckèless
Of dreamès; for I say thee doubtèless,
That many a dream full sore is for to dread.

Lo, in the life of St. Kenelm, that was Kenulphus's son, the noble king of Mercia, I read how Kenelm dreamed a thing a little time before he was murdered; he saw his murderer in a vision. His nurse expounded every bit of his dream to him and bade him to guard himself well from treason;

But he n'as but seven years old;
And therefore little talè hath he told
Of any dream, so holy was his heart.
By God, I haddè lever[4] than my shirt
That ye had read his legend, as have I.
. . . . .
Shortly I say as for conclusïon,
That I shall have of this avision[5]
Adversity; and I say furthermore,
That I ne tell[6] of laxatives no store;
For they be venomous, I wot it well;
I them defy; I love them never a del.[7]
Now let us speak of mirth, and stint all this.
Madamè Partelot, so have I bliss,

[1] Make aghast. [2] I know not why. [3] Learn.
[4] Rather. [5] Vision. [6] Reckon. [7] Never a bit.

Of one thing God hath sent me largè grace,
For when I see the beauty of your face,
Ye be so scarlet red about your eyen,
It maketh all my dreadè for to dien ;
For all so siker[1] as *In principio*
Mulier est hominis confusio,
(Madám, the sentence of this Latin is,
Woman is mannès joy and mannès bliss.[2])
For when I feel a-night your softè side

. . . . . .

I am so full of joy and of soláce,

that I defy both dreams and visions."

And with that word he flew down from the beam,
For it was day ; and eke his hennès all,
And with a chuck he 'gan them for to call,
For he had found a corn lay in the yard.
Royal he was, he was no more afeard.

. . . . . .

He looketh as it were a grim leoún,
And on his toes he roameth up and down ;
Him deigned not to set his foot to ground :
He chucketh when he hath a corn yfound,
And to him runnen then his wivès all.
Thus royal as a prince is in his hall,
Leave I this Chanticleer in his pastúre,
And after will I tell his ádventure.
When that the month in which the world began
That hightè March, when God first makèd man,
Was cómplete, and ypassèd were alsó,
Since March began, tway months, and dayès two
Befell, that Chanticleer in all his pride,
His seven wivès walking by his side,
Cast up his eyen to the brightè sun,
That in the sign of Taurus had yrun
Twenty degrees and one, and somewhat more,
He knew by kind,[3] and by no other lore,
That it was prime, and crew with blissful steven.[4]
"The sun," he said, "is clomben up on heaven
Twenty degrees and one, and more ywis.[5]
Madámè Partelot, my worldès bliss,
Hearkeneth these blissful birdès, how they sing ;
And see these freshè flow'res how they spring ;
Full is mine heart of revel and soláce !
But suddenly him fell a sorrowful case,[6]
For ever the latter end of joy is woe ;
God wot that worldly joy is soon ago.[7]

[1] Surely. [2] The Latin is "Woman is man's confusion."
[3] Instinct, nature. [4] Voice. [5] Ywis—of a certainty.
[6] A sorrowful hap befell him. [7] Gone.

And if a rhetorician could fairly indite, he might safely write it in a chronicle as a sovereign notability.

Now every wise man let him hearken me:
This story is all so true I undertake,
As is the book of Lancelot du Lake,
That women hold in full great reverence.
Now will I turn again to my sentence.

A col-fox, full of sly iniquity, that had dwelled in the grove three years,

By high imagination forecast,

broke through the hedges the same night, into the yard where the fair Chanticleer was wont to repair with his wives. And in the bed of herbs he lay there till it was past nine of the clock,

Waiting his time on Chanticleer to fall;
As gladly do these homicidès all

that lie in ambush to murder people.
O false murderer, lurking in thy den,

O new Iscariot, newe Ganelon![1]
Falsè dissimular, O Greek Sinón;
That broughtest Troy all utterly to sorrow;
O Chanticleer! accursèd be the morrow
That thou into the yard flew from the beams;
Thou wert full well ywarnèd by thy dreams,
That thilkè day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forewot[2] must needès be
After the opinïon of certain clerkès,
Witness on him that any perfect clerk is,

that in schools there is great altercations in the matter, and great disputes,

And hath been of a hundred thousand men.
But yet I cannot boult it to the bren[3]
As can the holy doctor Augustíne,
Or Boece, or the Bishop Bradwardin,

whether that God's worthy foreknowledge compelleth me necessarily to do a thing; . . . or else if free choice be granted me to do that same thing or not to do it, though God foreknew it

[1] Ganelon is said to have been an officer of Charlemagne's, who, by his treachery, caused the loss of the great battle of Roncevaux, and the death of Roland. He was, the Romance tells us, torn in pieces by wild horses; and his name became for centuries synonymous with the worst kind of treason.

[2] Foreknew.

[3] Sift it to the bran.

before it was wrought ; or if his knowledge compelleth me not a bit, except by conditional necessity.

I will not have to do of such mattére :
My tale is of a cock, as ye shall hear,
That took his counsel of his wife with sorrow,
To walken in the yard upon the morrow

that he had dreamed the dream, as I told you.

Womennès counsels be full often cold ;
Womennès counsel brought us first to woe,
And made Adám from Paradise to go,
There as he was full merry, and well at ease.

But for I know not whom I might offend, if I were to blame women's advice, pass it over, for I said it in my game.

Read authors, where they treat of such mattére,
And what they say of women ye may hear :
These be the cockès wordès, and not mine ;
I can none harm of no womén divine.
Fair in the sand, to bathe her merrily,
Li'th Partelot, and all her sisters by,
Against the sun ; and Chanticleer so free
Sang merrier than the mermaid in the sea ;
(For Physiologus[1] sayeth sikerly[2]
How that they singen well and merrily.)
And so befell that as he cast his eye
Among the wortès,[3] on a butterfly,
He was 'ware óf this fox that lay full low ;
Nothing ne list him thennè for to crow,
But cried anon "Cok ! Cok !" and up he start
As man that was affrighted in his heart ;
For naturally a beast desireth flee
From his contráry, if he may it see,
Though he ne'er erst had seen it with his eye.
This Chanticleer, when he 'gan it espy,
He would have fled, but that the fox anon
Said, "Gentle sir, alas ! where will ye gone ?[4]
Be ye afraid of me that am your friend
Now certes I were worse than any fiend,
If I to you would[5] harm or villany.
I am not come your counsel to espy,
But truëly the cause of my comíng
Was only for to hearken how ye sing ;
For truëly ye have as merry a steven[6]
As any angel hath that is in heaven ;

[1] A Middle Age work on Natural History. [2] Truly sayeth.
[3] Vegetables, herbs. [4] Go. [5] Intended. [6] Voice.

Therewith ye have of music more feeling
Than had Boece, or any that can sing.
My lord, your father (God his soulè bless !)
And eke your mother of her gentleness,
Have in my house ybeen to my great ease,
And certes, sir, full fain I would you please.
But for men speak of singing, I will say,

so may I use my two eyes,

Save you, ne heard I never man so sing
As did your father in the morrowning.[1]
Certes it was of heart all that he sung.
And for to make his voice the morè strong,
He would so pain him[2] that, with both his eyen,
He mustè wink,[3] so loud he wouldè crien,
And stonden on his tiptoes therewithal,
And stretchen forth his neckè long and small
And eke he was of such discretïon
That there n' as no man in no regïon
That him in song or wisdom mightè pass.
I have well read in 'Dan Burnel, the ass,'[4]
Among his verses, how there was a cock,
That, for a priestès son gave him a knock
Upon his leg, while he was young and nice,[5]
He made him for to lose his benefice.
But certain there is no comparison
Betwixt the wisdom and discretïon
Of your fathér and of his subtilty.
Now singeth, sir, for Saintè Charity !
Let see, can you your father counterfeit ? "
This Chanticleer his wingès 'gan to beat
As man that could his treason not espy,
So was he ravished with his flattery.

Alas, ye lords, many a false flatterer is in your court, and many a deceiver that better pleases you, by my faith, than he that speaks truly unto you. Read Ecclesiastes on flattery. Beware, ye lords, of the treachery of such men.

This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes, stretching his neck, and held his eyes shut, and began to crow loudly for the occasion, and Dan Russel,[6] the fox, started up at once, and seized him by the throat, and bore him on his back toward the wood, for yet there was no man pursued him.

O destiny that may not be avoided !

Alas ! that Chanticleer flew from the beams :
Alas ! his wife ne raughtè[7] not of dreams.

[1] Morning. [2] Strain, exert himself. [3] Shut both his eyes.
[4] A Latin satirical poem. [5] Foolish. [6] So called, it is supposed, from the russet colour of his coat. [7] Recked not.

And on a Friday all this mischance befell. . . . O Geoffrey,[1] dear sovereign master, that when thy worthy king, Richard, was slain with shot, complainedst so sorely of his death—why have I not now thy lore and science to chide the Friday, as ye did: for on a Friday truly Richard was killed. Then could I show you how I would lament for Chanticleer's fright and pain. Certainly such a cry,

or lamentation
Was never of ladies made, when Ilion
Was won, and Pyrrhus with his straightè swerd,
When he had hent[2] King Priam by the beard,
And slain him (as saith us Eneïdos[3])
As maden all the hennes in the close,[4]
When they had seen of Chanticleer the sight.
But sovereignly, Dame Partelotè shright.[5]
Full louder than did HasdrubalLès wife
When that her husband haddè lost his life,
And that the Romans had yburnt Carthage—
She was so full of torment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fire she start
And burnt herselven with a steadfast heart.
O woful hennès; right so crieden ye,
As when that Nero burntè the city
Of Romè, cried the senatourès wives,
For that their husbands losten all their lives;
Withouten guilt, this Nero hath them slain.
Now will I turn to my mattére again:
The silly[6] widow, and her daughters two,
Hearden these hennès cry and maken woe,
And out at doorès starten they anon,
And saw the fox toward the grove is gone,
And bare upon his back the cock away:
They crieden out, "Harow! and wala wa!
Ha, ha, the fox!" and after him they ran,
And eke with stavès many another man;
Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot, and Garland;
And Malkin, with a distaff in her hand;
Ran cow and calf, and eke the very hogs
So fearèd were for barking of the dogs,
And shouting of the men and women eke
They runnè that them thought their heartès break:
They yelleden as fiendès do in hell.
The duckès crieden as men would them quell;[7]
The geese for fearè flew ovér the trees;
Out of the hivè came the swarm of bees;
So hideous was the noise, ah *benedicite!*
Certes ne Jackè Straw, and his menie,[8]

[1] Of Monmouth. [2] Seized. [3] As the Æneid tells us. [4] Yard.
[5] Shrieked. [6] Simple. [7] Kill, destroy. [8] Followers.

Ne maden shoutès never half so shrill,
When that they woulden any Fleming kill,
As thilkè day was made upon the fox.

They brought horns of brass, of box, of horn, and of bone,

in which they blew and poopèd.
And therewithal they shriekèd and they hoopèd ;
It seemed as that heaven shouldè fall.
Now, goodè men, I pray you harkeneth all,
Lo, how fortunè turneth suddenly
The hope and pride eke of her enemy.
This cock that lay upon the fox's back
In all his dread, unto the fox he spake,
And saidè : Sir, if that I were as ye,
Yet would I say (as wisly,[1] God help me,)
" Turneth again, ye proudè churlès all !
A very pestilence upon you fall !
Now am I come unto this woodès side,
Maugre your head, the cock shall here abide ;
I will him eat, in faith, and that anon."
The fox answèr'd, " In faith it shall be done ! "
And while he spake that word, all suddenly

the cock broke swiftly from his mouth,

And high upon a tree he flew anon.
And when the fox saw that he was ygone,
" Alas ! " quoth he, " O Chanticleer, alas !
I have to you," quoth he, " ydone trespáss,
Inasmuch as I makèd you afeard,
When I you hent,[2] and brought out of the yard.
But, sir, I did it in no wick[3] intent :
Come down, and I shall tell you what I meant ;
I shall say sooth to you, God help me so."
" Nay then, quoth he, I shrewe[4] us bothè two,
And first I shrew myself, both blood and bonès,
If thou beguile me oftener than onès ;
Thou shalt no morè through thy flattery,
Do me[5] to sing, and winken with mine eye.

For he that winketh wilfully, when he should see, God never allows to thrive."

" Nay," quoth the fox, " but God give him mischance,
That is so indiscreet of governance,
That jangleth, when he shouldè hold his peace."

Lo, what it is to be reckless and negligent, and to put trust in flattery. But ye that hold this tale a folly,

[1] Certainly. [2] Seized. [3] Wicked. [4] Curse. [5] Make me.

As of a fox, or of a cock, or hen,
Take the morality thereof, good men;

for Saint Paul saith, that all that is written to our doctrine, it *is* written certainly.

Taketh the fruit, and let the chaff be still.
Now, goodè God, if that it be thy will,
As saith my lord, so make us all good men,
And bring us all to thy high bliss. *Amen.*

REMARKS ON THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE.

THAT Dryden could not improve, but found it easy to deteriorate, Chaucer, we have already endeavoured to show in our Remarks on the Knight's and the Wife of Bath's Tales. We have there seen him dealing by turns with the supernatural, the sublime, the pathetic, the chivalrous, and the simply poetical, and ever exhibiting a deficiency of the highest manifestations of the "vision and the faculty *divine;*" and thus rendering more evident by the contrast he has so imprudently provoked, the wonderful height, and completeness, and inexhaustible wealth of his great original. To complete this contrast, Dryden has given us his version of the Nun's Priest's Tale, a story of pure humour; and which, by its very perfection in Chaucer, tends to shut out criticism by leaving it nothing to do but to enjoy and to praise. Humour is poured through it in as rich, and deep, and constant a stream, as through the most distinguished of the merely humorous productions of our literature; but is also accompanied by a subtle and delicate spirit—there hangs over it a poetical transparent atmosphere—that the merely humorous writers know nothing of themselves, and of course cannot therefore create for others. In this, as in nearly all other respects, Chaucer resembles Shakspere; each one, when he chooses to put forth his strength, excels all other writers even in their own limited spheres of excellence. What an argument is this for the true law of education, the equal development of all the faculties! There has probably been no greater mistake ever made, whether in education or legislation, in political or in social economy, than is involved in the supposition that there is any real gain to be obtained by the partial neglect of some or other of God's gifts. What is true of a Chaucer in his position at the top of the intellectual scale, may be equally true of the mass of men, in their position, far lower down.

One of the most striking passages of the Nun's Priest's Tale, is that relating to the carrying off of the Cock on the Fox's back. Let us compare Chaucer and Dryden.

CHAUCER.

The silly widow, and her daughters two,
Hearden these hennès cry and maken woe,
And out at doorès started they anon,
And saw the Fox toward the grove is gone,
And bare upon his back the Cock away.

These lines are as quick and hurried as the incident then describe.

DRYDEN

gives us:

The trembling widow, and her daughters twain,
This woeful cackling cry with horror heard,
Of those distracted damsels in the yard,
And starting up beheld the heavy sight,
How Reynard to the forest took his flight,
And 'cross his back, as in triumphant scorn,
The hope and pillar of the house was borne.

So we perceive the widow must be a "trembling" one at the first outcry of the hens, instead of, as in Chaucer, a "silly" or simple one; she and her daughters must hear with "horror" instead of running, as they do in Chaucer, to see first whether there is anything to be horrified about; and the result is, that Dryden has lost all power of making a climax when he most wanted it—that is, when they see the Fox with the Cock on his back—and therefore he does not attempt it. In place of the dramatic and simply natural exclamation of:

CHAUCER—

"Harow! and wala wa!
Ha, Ha the Fox!"

Dryden must content himself with the neither dramatic nor true line,

DRYDEN.

"The Fox! the *wicked Fox!* was all the cry."

And all through the description there is the same faith on Chaucer's part, the same want of faith on Dryden's, in the natural simplicities. How vigorous and rapid—how perfect an echo of sound to sense—are the following lines!

CHAUCER.

and after him they ran,
And eke with stavès many another man;

Ran Col our dog, and Talbot, and Garlánd,
And Malkin, with a distaff in her hand ;
Ran cow and calf ; and eke the very hogs
So fearèd were for barking of the dogs,
And shouting of the men and women eke,
They runnè, that them thought their heartès break :
They yelleden as fiendès do in hell.
The duckès crieden as men would them quell ;[1]
The geese for fearè flew ovér the trees ;
Out of the hivè came the swarm of bees ;
So hideous was the noise, ah *benedicte !*
Certes, ne Jackè Straw, and his menie,
Ne maden shoutès never half so shrill,
When that they woulden any Fleming kill,
As thilkè day was made upon the Fox.
Of brass they broughten hornès, and of box,
Of horn, and bone, in which they blew and poopèd.
And therewithal they shriekèd, and they hoopèd,
It seem'd as that the heaven shouldè fall.

On the other hand, how wordy and full of exaggeration are the corresponding lines by

DRYDEN.

Out from his house ran every neighbour nigh,
The Vicar first, and after him the crew,
With forks and staves the felon to pursue ;
Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot with the band,
And Malkin with her distaff in her hand ;
Ran cow and calf, and family of hogs,
In panic horror of pursuing dogs,
With many a deadly grunt and doleful squeak ;
Poor swine, as if their *pretty* hearts would break.
The shouts of men, *the women, in dismay,*
With shrieks augment the terror of the day.
The ducks that heard the proclamation cried,
And fear'd a persecution might betide,
Full twenty mile from town their voyage take,
Obscure in rushes of the liquid lake.
The geese fly over the barn ; the bees in arms
Drive headlong from their waxen cells in swarms.
Jack Straw at London-stone, with all his rout,
Struck not the city with so loud a shout ;
Not when with English hate they did pursue
A Frenchman, or an unbelieving Jew ;
Not when the welkin rung with one and all,
And echoes bounded back from Fox's hall ;
Earth seemed to sink beneath, and Heaven above to fall.

[1] Kill, destroy.

With might and main they chac'd the murderous Fox
With brazen trumpets and inflated box,
To kindle Mars with military sounds;
Nor wanted horns to inspire sagacious hounds.

The extraordinary carelessness or deficiency of artistical skill evidenced by the introduction of the last four lines, with the nonsense about "Mars" and "military sounds," after the description to which they properly belonged had been brought to a close, must strike every one. But all through, Chaucer's delicate and spirit-inspiring champagne is changed by Dryden into what is at the best but a "strong full-bodied port," as the vintners say. In Chaucer the thing itself is brought before us; the flesh-and-blood rustics, the true country, the very aroma of hay-fields seems to rise from the page; Dryden's is just such a rough and vigorous description of the thing as an able poet, always accustomed to enjoy the country—from a distance—might be expected to be able to give; no more. And the strangest part of all these strange literary transactions, is the fact ever staring us in the face, that all that is good in Dryden, with few, if any, exceptions, belongs to Chaucer; and all that is bad in Dryden is his own unquestionable property.

The germ of the Nun's Priest's Tale is to be found in the collection of Æsopean and other fables by a French poetess of the name of Marie, and she states she obtained it from an Anglo-Saxon translation of the Latin, made by no less a personage than the good and great King Alfred. Tyrrwhitt gives the passage in French from Marie as a convincing proof how able Chaucer was to work up an excellent Tale out of very small materials, But there can be little doubt that Chaucer got the idea of his Dream, and the hunt after the fox, from the *Roman du Renart*, which expands Marie's short fable of 38 lines into 454. These are reprinted, with English side-notes, by Dr. Furnivall, in the Chaucer's Society's 'Originals and Analogues,' pp. 117-126, preceded by Marie's fable, on p. 116. There is also a Latin version p. 114, and Professor B. ten Brink's letter containing it should be read.

THE SECOND NUN'S TALE.

IN order to avoid the minister and the nurse unto vice, which men call in English Idleness, the porter of the Gate of Delight—and by her opposite, that is to say, by lawful Business, to overpower her, we ought certainly to do our utmost, lest that the fiend seize us through our idleness.

For he that waiteth with his thousand subtle cords continually to catch us, when he may espy a man in idleness, can catch him so lightly in his trap that until he is seized by the skirt, he is not aware the fiend hath taken him in hand; well, therefore, ought we to work, and to resist idleness.

And though men never dread to die, yet they, doubtless, see well, by reason, that idleness is the root of sloth, of which no good increase ever cometh. And lo! sloth holdeth them in a leash only for to sleep, eat, and drink, and to devour all that others labour for.

To put from us such idleness, that is a cause of great confusion, I have here done my business faithfully to translate the legend—

> Right of this glorious life and passion,
> Thou with thy garland, wrought with rose and lily,
> Thee mean I, maid and martyr, Saint Cecily.[1]
>
> And thou, that flower art of virginès all,
> Of whom that Bernard lust so well to write,
> To thee at my beginning first I call,
> Thou comfort of us wretches, do me[2] endite,
> Thy maiden's death, that won through her meríte
> Th' eternal life, and over the fiend victóry,
> As man may after readen in her story.

Thou maid and mother, daughter of thy son; thou well of mercy; thou cure of sinful souls, in whom that God, of his bounty, chose to dwell: thou humble, yet high above every earthly being; thou madest so noble our nature, that the Maker did not disdain—

[1] Cecilia. [2] Make me.

His son in blood and flesh to clothe and wind.

Within the blissful cloister of thy sides took man's shape, the Eternal Love, and Peace, that is Lord and guide of the Trinity, whom earth, and sea, and heaven for ever unceasingly praise. And thou virgin unspotted bare of thy body—

The Crèator of every creäture.

Assembled is in thee magnificence
With mercy, goodness, and with such pity,
That thou, that art the sun of excellence,
Not only helpest them that prayen thee,
But often time of thy benignity,
Full freely, ere that men thine help beseech,
Thou goest before, and art their livès leech.[1]

Now help, thou meek and blissful fair maid, me, banished wretch, in this desert of gall; think on the woman of Cana that said that whelps ate some of the crumbs that fell from their lord's table; and though that I, unworthy son of Eve, be sinful, yet accept my belief.

And inasmuch as that faith is dead without works, give me therefore wit and space so to work that I be freè from the place of utter darkness.

O thou that art so fair and full of grace,
Be thou mine advocate in that high place,
There as[2] withouten end is sung Hosanne!
Thou, Christès mother, daughter dear of Anne.

And of thy light my soul in prison light,
That troubled is by the contagïon,
Of my body, and also by the weight
Of every lust, and false affectïon;
O haven of refuge! O salvatïon
Of them that be in sorrow and distress,
Now help, for to my work I will me 'dress.[3]

Yet pray I you that readen that I write,[4]
Forgive me, that I do no diligence
This ilkè story subtly to endite;
For both have I the wordès and sentènce
Of him, that at the saintès reverence
The story wrote,[5] and followed their legénd;
And pray you that ye will my work amend.

[1] Physician, healer. [2] Where. [3] Address myself.

[4] Chaucer forgot that his Tale is supposed to be *told* to his fellow-pilgrims.

[5] Jacobus a Voragine, in his *Legenda Aurea.*

First will I you the name of Saint Cecily
Expound, as men may in her story see:
It is to say in English, Heaven's lily,
For purè chasteness of virginity,
Or for she witness had of honesty,
And green of conscience, and of good fame,
The sweetè savour, lily was her name.

Or Cecile is to say, the way of blind,[1]
For she example was by way of teaching;
Or else Cecily, as I written find,
Is joinèd by a manner cónjoining,
Of heaven and *lya*; and here in figuring
The heaven is set for thought of holiness,
And *lya* for her lasting busïness.

Cecily may also be explained in this manner—wanting[2] of blindness, from her great light of wisdom, and from her clear qualities.

Or elles lo, this maiden's namè bright
Of heaven and *Leos* cometh, of which by right
Men might her well the heaven of people call,
Example of good and wisè workès all.

For *Leos* 'people' in English is to say;
And right as men may in the heaven see
The sun and moon, and starrès every way,
Right so men ghostly[3] in this maiden free
Seën of faith the magnanimity,
And eke the clearness whole of sapience,[4]
And sundry workès, bright of excellence.

And right so as these philosóphers write,
That heaven is swift and round, and eke burníng,
Right so was fair Cecilia the white—
Full swift and busy ever in good workíng,
And round and whole in good persévering,
And burning ever in charity full bright:
Now have I you declarèd what she hight.[5]

This maiden, bright Cecile, as her Life saith,
Was come of Romans, and of noble kind;
And from her cradle fostered in the faith
Of Christ, and bare his Gospel in her mind.
She never ceasèd, as I written find,
Of her prayére, and God to love and dread,

beseeching him to keep her in purity.

[1] The way or guide *of* or *for* the blind. [2] Lacking. [3] In spirit.
[4] Wisdom. [5] Was called.

And when this maiden should unto a man
Ywedded be, that was full young of age,
Which that yclepèd was Valerian,
And day was comen of her marriage,
She, full devout and humble in her courage,[1]
Under her robe of gold, that sat full fair,
Had next her flesh yclad her in a hair.[2]

Andwhile the organs made melody, to God alone, in her heart, thus she sang: "O Lord, keep my soul and body unspotted, lest that I be brought to confusion." And for His love that died on the tree, she fasted every second or third day, ever busily praying in her orisons.

As the night came, she said to her husband privately,

"O sweet and well-beloved spousè dear,
There is a counsel, and[3] ye will it hear,
Which that right fain I would unto you say,
So that ye swear ye shall it not betray."

Valerian began quickly to swear unto her, that for no cause or thing that might be, would he betray her to any one; and then at once she said to him,

"I have an angel which that loveth me,
That with great love, whereso[4] I wake or sleep,
Is ready aye my body for to keep;

And if that he may feelen, out of dread[5]
That ye me touch or love in villainy,[6]
He right anon will slay you with the dead,
And in your youthè thus ye shoulden die;
And if that ye in cleanè love me gie,[7]
He will you love as me, for your cleannéss,[8]
And show to you his joy, and his brightnéss."

Valerian, corrected as God would,
Answer'd again, "If I shall trusten thee,
Let me that angel see, and him behold;
And if that it a very angel be,
Then will I do as thou has prayèd me;
And if thou love another man, forsooth,
Right with this sword then will I slay you both."

Cecile answér'd anon right in this wise:
"If that you list, the angel shall ye see,
So that ye trowe[9] on Christ, and you baptize;
Go forth to Via Appia (quoth she),
That from this town ne stands but milès three,

[1] Heart. [2] Hair cloth. [3] Secret, if. [4] Whether. [5] Out of doubt.
[6] Lust. [7] Guide. [8] Purity. [9] Believe.

And to the poorè folkès that there dwell,
Say them right thus, as that I shall you tell.

"Tell them that I, Cecile, you to them sent,
To showen you the good Urbán the old
For secret needès, and for good intent;
And when that ye Saint Urban have behold,[1]
Tell him the wordès which I to you told;
And when that he hath purgèd you from sin,
Then shall ye see that angel ere ye twinne."[2]

Valerian goes to the place, and just as she had taught him, he found the holy Urban anon, lurking among the burial places of the saints; and he immediately, without delay, did his message;

And when that he it told,
Urban for joy his handès 'gan uphold.

The tearès from his eyen let he fall:
"Almighty Lord, O Jesu Christ," quoth he,
Sower of chaste counseil, herd[3] of us all,
The fruit of thilkè seed of chastity
That thou has sown in Cecile, take to thee:
Lo, like a busy bee withouten guile,
Thee serveth aye thine owèn thrall Cecile."

For this spouse, that she took but now, . . . she sendeth here,

As meek as ever was any lamb to ewe.
And with that word anon there 'gan appear
An old man, clad in whitè clothès clear,
That had a book with letters of gold in hand,
And 'gan before Valerian to stand.

Valerian, as dead, fell down from fear, when he saw him; and he then took him up, and in his book he thus began to read, of Lord, of Faith, of God alone in his power, of Christendom, and of the Father of all,

"Aboven all, and over all everywhere:"
These wordès all with gold ywritten were.

When this was read, then said this olde man,
"'Lievest[4] thou this thing or no? say yea or nay."
"I 'lievè all this thing," quoth Valerian,
"For soother[5] thing than this I dare well say,
Under the heaven, no wight thinken may."
Then vanish'd th' oldè man, he n' istè where,
And Pope Urbán him christenèd right there.

[1] Beheld. [2] Separate, depart. [3] Keeper.
[4] Believest. [5] Truer.

Valerian go'th home, and finds Cecily
Within his chamber with an angel stand;
This angel had of roses and of lily
Coronès two, the which he bare in hand;
And first to Cécile, as I understand,
He gave that one, and after 'gan he take
That other to Valerian her make.[1]

"With body clean, and with unwemmèd[2] thought,
Keepeth aye well these còrones two," quoth he,
"From Paradise to you I have them brought,
Ne never more ne shall they rotten[3] be,
Ne lose their sweetè savour, trusteth me,
Ne never wight shall see them with his eye
But[4] he be chaste, and hatè villainy.[5]

And thou, Valerian, for that thou now assentest to good counsel, say what will best please thee, and thou shalt have thy boon."

"I have a brother," quoth Valerian, tho,[6]
"That in this world I lovè no man so;
I pray you that my brother may have grace
To know the truth, as I do in this place"

The angel said, "God liketh thy desire. With the palm of martyrdom, ye shall both come into his blissful rest." And with that word Tiburce his brother came, and when that he perceived the fragrance

Which that the roses and the lilies cast,
Within his heart he 'gan to wonder fast.

And said, "I wonder this time of the year,
Whennès that sweetè savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies, that I smellè here;
For though I had them in mine handès two
The savour might in me no deeper go:
The sweetè smell, that in mine heart I find,
Hath changèd me all in another kind."

Valerian said; "Two còronès have we
Snow-white and rosy-red, that shinen clear,
Which that thine eyèn have no might to see;
And as thou smellest them through my prayére
So shall thou see them, levè[7] brother dear,
If it so be thou wilt withouten slouth[8]
Believe aright, and know the very truth."

[1] Mate. [2] Unspotted.
[3] Or, in other words, They shall never fade. [4] Unless.
[5] Lust. [6] Then. [7] Loved. [8] Sloth.

Tiburce answérèd; "Saist thou this to me
In soothness, or in dreams hearkén I this?"
"In dreamès," quoth Valerian, "have we be[1]
Unto this timè, brother mine, ywis:[2]
But now at rest in truth our dwelling is."
"How wott'st thou this?" quoth Tiburce; "in what wise?"
Quoth Valerian; "That shall I thee devise.

The angel of God hath taught me the truth, and thou shalt see it, if thou wilt renounce the idols, and be pure, and nothing else." Then Cecilia showed him, plain and fully, that all idols are but vain, for they are deaf and dumb, and charged him to leave them.

"Whoso that trow'th[3] not this, a beast he is,"
Quoth this Tiburce, "if that I shall not lie."
And she 'gan kiss his breast when she heard this,
And was full glad he couldè truth espy.
"This day I takè thee for mine ally,"
Saidè this blissful fairè maiden dear.
And after that, she said as ye may hear:

"Lo, right so as the love of Christ," quoth she,
"Made me thy brother's wife, right in that wise,
Anon for mine ally here take I thee,
Since that thou wilt thine idolès despise:
Go with thy brother now, and thee baptize,
And make thee clean, so that thou may behold
The angel's face, of which thy brother told."

Tiburce answered, and saidè, "Brother dear,
First tell me whither I shall, and to what man."
"To whom?" quoth he; "come forth with goodè cheer,
I will lead thee unto the Pope Urbán."
"To Urban? brother mine, Valerian!"
Quoth then Tiburce, "Wilt thou me thither lead?
Me thinketh that it were a wondrous deed.

Thou meanest not Urban," quoth he then, "that has been so often condemned to death, and who dwelleth always in corners, running to and fro,

And dare not onès putten forth his head?
Men should him burnen in a fire so red,
If he were found, or if men might him spy,
And we also, to bear him company.

And while we seek this divinity, that is privily hid in heaven, we shall be burnt in this world."

[1] Been. [2] Certainly. [3] Believeth.

To whom Cecíly answered boldèly,
"Men mighten dreaden well and skilfully[1]
This life to lose, mine owen dearè brother,
If this were living only and none other.

But there is better life in other place
That never shall be lost, ne dread thee nought,[2]
Which Goddès son us toldè through his grace;
That Father's son, that allè thingès wrought,
And all that wrought is with a skilful thought,
The ghost,[3] that from the Father 'gan proceed,
Hath 'soiled[4] them withouten any drede."

"That shall I tell," quoth she, "before I go. Just as a man hath threefold wisdom—memory, imagination, and judgment—so in one being of divinity there may very well be three persons." Then she began busily to preach Christ's message, and to teach His sorrows, and many points of His passion: How God's Son was detained in this world to perform full remission for mankind,

That was ybound in sin and carés cold;
All this thing she unto Tiburcè told.
And after this Tibúrce in good intent,
With Valerian to Pope Urbán he went.

He, Urban,

thankèd God, and with glad heart and light
He christened him, and made him in that place
Perfect in his learníng, and Goddès knight.
And after this Tiburcè got such grace,
That every day he saw in time and space
The angel of God, and every manner boon[5]
That he God askèd, it was sped full soon.

It were full hard by order for to sain[6]
How many wonders Jesus for them wrought.
But at the last, to tellen short and plain,
The sergeants of the town of Rome them sought,
And them before Almache, the Prefect, brought,
Which them apposed,[7] and knew all their intent,
And to the image of Jupiter them sent.

And said, "Whoso will not do sacrifice, strike off his head! This is my sentence here." Maximus, an officer of the Prefect—and his Cornicular—seized these martyrs, and when he led the saints forth, wept himself for pity.

When Maximus had heard the saints' lore, he obtained leave of the tormentor, and led them to his house. And with their

[1] Wisely. [2] Have thou no dread of it. [3] Spirit.
[4] Assoiled—saved their soul. [5] Of boon. [6] Say. [7] Questioned.

preaching, before it was eve, they began to drive away the false faith of the tormentors, and of Maximus, and of his people, and to make them believe in God only.

Cecilia came with priests when it was waxen night, and christened them all together.

And afterward when day was waxen light,
Cecile them said, with a full stedfast cheer,
"Now Christès owèn knightès, leve[1] and dear,
Cast all away the workès of darknêss
And armeth you in armour of brightnêss.

Ye have, forsooth, ydone a great battaílle,
Your course is done, your faith have ye conserv'd,
Go to the crown of life that may not fail,
The rightful judgè, which that ye have served,
Shall give it you, as ye have it deserved."
And when this thing was said, as I devise,
Men led them forth to do the sacrifice.

But when they weren to the place ybrought,
To tellen shortly the conclusïon,
They n'ould[2] incense, ne sacrifice right nought,
But on their knees they setten them adown,
With humble heart, and sad devotïon,
And leften both their headès in the place:
Their soulès wenten to the King of grace.

This Maximus, who saw this thing happen, told anon with piteous tears,

That he their soulès saw to heaven glide
With angels, full of clearness, and of light,
And with his word converted many a wight;

for which Almachius caused him to be beaten with whips of lead till he began to leave his life.

Cecile him took, and buried him anon
By Tiburce and Valerian softèly,
Within their burying place, undér the stone;
And after this Almachius hastily
Bade his minísters fetchen openly
Cecile, so that she might in his presénce
Do sacrifice, and Jupiter incénse.

But they, converted at her wisè lore,
Wepten full sore, and gaven full credènce
Unto her word, and cryden more and more,
"Christ! Goddès son, withouten difference
Is very God; this is all our sentènce,[3]

[1] Loved. [2] Would not. [3] Opinion, belief.

That hath so good a servant him to serve ;
Thus with one voice we trowen,[1] though we sterve."[2]

Almachius, that heard of this doing, bade them fetch Cecile, that he might see her. And at the very first, lo ! this was his question—

"What manner woman artè thou ?" quoth he.
"I am a gentlewoman born," quoth she.
"I askè thee," quoth he, "though thee it grieve,
Of thy religion and of thy believe."

"You begin your question foolishly," quoth she, "that would two answers conclude in one demand. Ye ask ignorantly." Almachius said to that similitude, "Of whence cometh so rude an answer ?" "Of whence ?" quoth she, when she was asked,

"Of conscïence, and of good faith unfeign'd."

Almachius said, "Takest thou no heed of my power ?" And she answered him thus : "Your might is little to dread, for every mortal man's power is but like a bladder of wind certainly.

For with a needle's point, when it is blow,[3]
May all the boast of it be laid full low."

"Wrongfully thou began," quoth he, "and yet in wrong thou perseverest. Knowest thou not how our free and mighty princes have thus commanded and made ordinance that every Christian wight shall have suffering unless he will deny his Christianity ; whilst he may go freely if he will renounce it ?"

"Your princes err, as do your nobles," quoth then Cecily, "and with a wild sentence

Ye make us guilty, and it is not sooth ;[4]
For ye, that knowen well our innocence,
For as much as we do aye reverence
To Christ, and for we bear a Christian name,
Ye put on us a crime, and eke a blame.

But we, that know that name so well for a virtuous one, may not deny it." Almachius answered, "Choose one of these two : do sacrifice or renounce Christianity,

That thou may now escapen by that way."
At which the holy blissful fairè maid
'Gan for to laugh, and to the judgè said—

"O judge, confused in thy folly, wouldest thou that I renounced innocence to make me a wicked wight ?" quoth she. "Lo !

[1] Believe. [2] Perish.
[3] When *it*—the bladder—is fully *blow*, or blown. [4] True.

here in audience he dissimuleth. He stareth, and is mad in his inadvertency." Almachius then said to her,

"Unhappy wretch, knowest thou not how far my power may extend? Hath not our mighty princes given—yea, both power and authority– to me to make folk live or die?

Why speakest thou so proudly then to me?"
"I ne speak not but stedfastly," quoth she,
"Not proudèly; for I say, as for my side,
We haten, deadly, thilkè vice of pride.

And if thou dread not to hear a truth, then will I show all openly, and by right, that thou hast made a great falsehood; thou sayest thy princes have given thee power both for to slay and for to give life to a wight—thou, that canst only bereave of life, and hast no other power nor permission. But thou mayest say they have made thee minister of death; for if thou speak of more thou liest; for thy power is bare."

"Put away thy boldness," said Almachius then,

"And sacrifice to our gods ere thou go.
I reckè not what wrong that thou me proffer,
For I can suffer as a philosópher.

But thilkè wrongès may I not endure
That thou speak'st of our goddès here," quoth he.
Cecile answer'd, "O nicè[1] creäture!
Thou saidest no word since thou spake to me,
That I ne knew therewith thy nicety,[2]
And that thou wert in every manner wise,
A lewèd[3] officer, a vain justíce.

There lacketh nothing to thine outer eyen
That thou art blind; for thing that we see all
That it is stone, that men may well espien,
That ilkè stone a god thou wilt it call;
I rede[4] thee, let thine hand upon it fall,
And test it well, and stone thou shalt it find,
Since that thou seest not with thine eyen blind.

It is a shame that the people shall so scorn thee, and laugh at thy folly, for commonly, men know it well, that mighty God is in heaven high, over all; and these images, thou mayest well see, are neither to thee nor to themselves profit: in effect they are worthless." These and other such words she said; and he waxed wroth, and bade men lead her home to her house, and—"In her house," quoth he, "burn her in a bath with red flames." And as he bade, so was the deed done. They shut her fast in a bath, and kept up, night and day, great fires beneath.

[1] Foolish. [2] Absurdity. [3] Ignorant. [4] Advise.

The longè night, and eke a day also,
For all the fire, and eke the bathès heat,
She sate all cold, and felt of it no woe,
It made her not one droppè for to sweat.

But in that bath she must leave her life; for he, Almachius, with a wicked purpose, sent his message to slay her in the bath.

The tormentor then smote her three strokes in the neck; but for no kind of chance could he smite her neck quite asunder. And as there was an ordinance at that time that no man should do unto man such pain as to strike a fourth stroke,

soft or sore,
This tormentor ne durstè do no more.

But half dead, with her neck cut, he left her lying, and went on his way. The Christian folk who were about her have stopped the blood with sheets. Three days she lived in this torment, and she never ceased to teach the faith she had fostered in them. And she gave them her movables and her things and recommended them to the Pope Urban, and said:—"I asked of the King of Heaven to have three days' respite, and no more, to recommend you before I go, these souls, and that I might found here of my house a perpetual church."

Saint Urban, with his deacons, privily fetched the body, and buried it by night among his other saints decently. Her house was called the church of Saint Cecilia.

Saint Urban hallowed it, as he well might,
In which unto this day, in noble wise,
Men do to Christ and to his saints service.

REMARKS ON THE SECOND NUN'S TALE.

AMONG the apparent contradictions of the human character none appear to be more striking than its frequent tendency to court the very sufferings, disgrace, and death that are generally shunned with so much solicitude:—to be to-day the slave of the grossest superstitions; to-morrow, the martyr asserting successfully not only its independence of all princes and potentates, but putting on with its own hand the fiery crown that betokens a mightier conquest—the sovereignty over self. Yet surely the explanation is as simple as the conclusions to be drawn from

it are sublime. Fitted for all imaginable stages of development, from the poor idiot up to him who is indeed but a little lower than the angels—a Plato or a Shakspere—man, through the operation of a law that compels progress, yet beneficently provides for the periods of rest his waywardness or weakness demands, by lessening the desire with the decrease of the ability to proceed—is ever in a kind of harmony with the work he sees before him. If that be little, he will become little too, and will grow less through the decay or perversion of his unused or misused powers, and through his conscious or unconscious contempt for and dissatisfaction with his daily life. And if the process be long continued, the evil changes its negative for a positive character, until there be no depths of sensuality, or degradation, or vice, left unsounded by the falling spirit.

In some such position as this do we see man if we look back eighteen and a half centuries ago. We see that he has exhausted the energies that have enabled him under the Roman banners to carry some sort of civilization abroad over the whole known world ; and now growing drunk, as it were, with blood, and overburdened with spoil, he falls into a kind of torpor. All sense of decency, or justice, or honour, or public spirit, or religious faith, appear dead within him. Surely he is utterly lost.

Happily, it is not so, never can be so. Let but a new and great idea be placed before him—and see how his whole inner being is illumined—how he starts from his long sleep, or from his idle purposeless wanderings, even from the deepest abysses of self-abasement, and with a strength proportioned to the delay that has taken place, moves resistlessly forward, his whole nature expanding with the consciousness of a hero's work into the true heroic mould ; and if at last the cross or the stake bar his way, he accepts that final testimony of his faith as his final triumph—knowing that the very ashes the executioner will scatter to the winds with all the marks of judicial infamy, will be like seed endowed in every particle with the power of reproduction, and so raise up a host of martyrs in his place—again to die, and again to originate still more numerous and determined self-sacrificers. Suddenly the despised, down-trodden creed is found to have penetrated into all quarters, and has become too potent to be any longer resisted.

Thus, after the death of Christ, was Christianity first established, and mankind raised from the depths of wretchedness and infamy in which the Roman conquests left them ; thus was the subsequent Reformation of Christianity worked out ; the minds of the Reformers of the sixteenth century having been nourished by the tales and legends of the sublime devotion of

the early Christians. The 'Second Nun's Tale' is a legend of this kind. And it is an interesting question to speculate upon Chaucer's motives in writing it. He has given us in the character of the Poor Parson an example for all time of what a Christian pastor should be; and he has shown us in the characters of Constance, 'in the Man of Law's Tale;' and Griselde, in the 'Clerk's Tale,' what Christ's people should be. On the other hand, he has shown us with a masterly and unsparing hand the state of the Church as it was when monks could ride about in rich luxuriance and indolent state—when friars spent their time in ale-houses, ballad-singing, or in intrigues with women, or when such unmitigated scoundrels as the Pardoner and Sumpnour wandered over England, imposing upon the credulous, bullying the timid, oppressing the poor and friendless, and disgusting all not only with their lives and conversations, but with their authorized direct connexion with the once pure Church of Christ. What more could Chaucer do to make the what *ought to be*—the *is* of the religious life of England?

He must have known the strength of the powers that were, who supported and believed they throve by these abuses—he must have seen that there would have to be a great, possibly a tragic struggle to overthrow them.

To endeavour, therefore, to strengthen the hearts and elevate the minds of the people for such a struggle, was a task that still remained for him. May it not have been with that view Chaucer took up one of the most popular legends connected with the sufferings of the early English martyrs, and gave to it new vitality and influence by his skill?

The miraculous portion of the Legend of St. Cecilia remains in Chaucer as he found it, that is to say, after the approved pattern of all such compositions. The earliest martyrdoms were narrated simply, as, for instance, that of Stephen in the Bible; but the highly excited state of the imaginations both of those who suffered and of those who witnessed or listened to accounts of martyrdoms, gave rise as early as the second century to the faith that supernatural incidents commonly accompanied them. "These deaths of the primitive martyrs," writes Middleton, "seldom failed of being accompanied by miracles which, as we find them related in the old Martyrologies, were generally copied from each other: concerning sweet smells issuing from their bodies, and their wonderful resistance to all kinds of torture; and the miraculous cures of their wounds and bruises, so as to tire their tormentors by the difficulty of destroying them, which yet, after a vain profusion of miracles, was always effected at the last."

The poet writes, that Valerian found this holy Urban

Among the *saintes burials* lurking,

and that the place was a short distance from Rome on the Appian Way. There can be no doubt as to the place referred to—the Catacombs, which still form one of the most interesting spots in the vicinity of Rome. The entrance to these subterranean excavations is from the Via Appia, and the visitor presently finds himself groping through long galleries that twist and twine in every direction as if to baffle hostile pursuit, and on each side of the narrow and gloomy way is ranged a triple tier of graves or cells. As he goes on, he finds himself every now and then emerging into large vaulted chambers; and he reflects with no ordinary emotion that he stands where the earliest Christians worshipped—that he has been wandering among the remains of the earliest believers in Christianity. Under what circumstances such burials and such service took place he needs no one to tell him. Fear, flight, persecution are stamped indelibly on all that he sees. We may add that the distance to which these galleries are said to extend is almost incredible; the guides talk of twenty miles!

In the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues,' pp. 189-219, are printed Chaucer's source of his Second Nun's Tale, '*Jacobus a Voragine*,' about 1290 A.D., and three versions of it, the French of Jehan De Vignay, about 1300 A.D., the Early English, before 1300 A.D., and Caxton's, A.D. 1483. Chaucer englished lines 36-44 and 50-56 of his Preamble to this Tale from twelve of the first twenty-one lines of Dante's *Paradiso*, Canto xxxiii.

THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE.

THE dramatic introduction of the Canon and his Yeoman among the Pilgrims has already been shown in the Prologue, pages 121 to 125.

There is a canon of religïon,
Amongès us, would ínfect all a town,
Though it as great were as was Nineveh,
Rome, Álisandre,[1] Troy, or other three.
His sleightès and his infinite falsenéss
There couldè no man writen, as I guess,
Though that he mightè live a thousand year:

in all the world there is not his equal for falseness.

For in his termès he will him so wind,
And speak his wordès in so sly a kind,
When he communen shall with any wight,
That he will make him doaten ánon right,
But[2] it a fiend be, as himselven is.
Full many a man hath he beguil'd ere this,
And will, if that he livè may a while.
And yet men ride and go full many a mile
Him for to seek, and have his ácquaintance,
Not knowing of his falsè governance;
And if you list to give me audïence
I will it tellen here in your presénce.
But, worshipful canóns religïouse,
Ne deemeth not that I slandér your house,
Although my Talè of a canon be:
Of every order some shrew[3] is pardé;
And God forbid that all a company
Should rue a singular mannès folly.
To slander you is nothing mine intent,
But to correcten that is 'miss[4] I meant.
This Talè was not only told for you,
But eke for other more: ye wot well how
That among Christès apostéles twelve
There was no traitor but Judás himselve;

[1] Alexandria. [2] Except. [3] Cursed, wicked. [4] Amiss.

Then why should all the remenant have a blame
That guiltless were? By you I say the same;
Save only this, if ye will hearken me,
If any Judas in your convent be,

I advise you, remove him betimes,

If shame or loss may causen any dread.
And be no thing displeasèd I you pray,
But in this casè heark'neth what I say.

In London there was a priest, one of those who sing annual masses for the dead,

That therein dwellèd haddè many a year;
Which was so pleasant and so serviceable
Unto the wife, where as he was at table,[1]
That she would suffer him nothing to pay
For board ne clothing, went he never so gay;
And spending silver had he right enow.

No matter for that, I will proceed at once to tell my Tale of the Canon that brought this priest unto confusion:—

This falsè canon came upon a day
Unto the priestès chamber, where he lay,
Beseeching him to lend him a certain[2]
Of gold, and he would quit[3] it him again.
"Lend me a mark," quoth he, "but dayès three,
And at my day[4] I will it quitten thee;

And if it so be that thou find me false, another day hang me up by the neck."

The priest fetched him a mark, and that gladly, and the canon thanked him many times, and took his leave, and went on his way. And at the third day he brought his money,

And to the priest he took his gold again,
Whereof this priest was wondrous glad and fain.
"Certes," quoth he, "nothing annoyeth me
To lend a man a noble, or two, or three,
Or what thing were in my possessïon,
When he so true is of conditïon,
That in no wise he breaken will his day:
To such a man I can nevér say nay."
"What?" quoth this canon. "Should I be untrue?
Nay, that were thing yfallen of the new.

[1] Where he boarded. [2] Certain sum. [3] Pay.
[4] The day appointed.

Truth is a thing that I will ever keep
Unto the day in which that I shall creep
Into my grave, and ellès God forbid!

Believe this as certainly as your creed.

God thank I, and in good timè be it said,
That there was never man evíl repaid
For gold ne silver that he to me lent;
Ne never falsehood in mine heart I meant.
And, sir," quoth he, "now of my privity,
Since ye so goodly have been unto me,

and showed to me such great gentleness, I will, somewhat to repay your kindness, show you, if you please to learn—

"I will you teachen plainly the mannére
How I can worken in philosophy.
Taketh good heed, ye shall well see at eye [1]
That I will do a mastery ere I go."
"Yea?" quoth the priest, "yea, sir, and will ye so?
Marry thereof I pray you heartily."
"At your commandèment, sir, truëly,"
Quoth the canón, "and ellès God forbid."

Lo, how this thief could manage his service!

Full true it is that such proffered service stinketh, as witness these old wise men; and I will verify it soon in this canon, root of all treachery, that ever more hath delight and gladness (such fiend-like thoughts reign in his heart)—

How Christès people he may to mischief bring;
God keep us from his false dissimuling!
What wistè this priest with whom that he dealt?
Ne of his harm comíng he nothing felt.
O silly[2] priest! O silly innocent,

with covetousness anon thou shalt be shrunk.

O gracèless, full blind is thy conceit,[3]
Nothing art thou aware of the deceit,
Which that this fox yshapen hath to thee;
His wily wrenches[4] thou ne may'st not flee.
Wherefore to go to the conclusïon
That réferreth to thy confusïon,
Unhappy man, anon I will me hie,[5]
To tellen thine unwit and thy folly,
And eke the falseness of that other wretch,
As far forth as that my conníng[6] will stretch.

[1] You shall see with your eyes. [2] Simple. [3] Delusion.
[4] Stratagems. [5] Haste. [6] Skill.

This canon was my lord, ye woulden ween,[1]
Sir host? In faith, and by the heaven's queen,
It was another canon, and not he,
That can a hundred fold more subtlely.
He hath betrayèd folkès many a time;
Of his falsenèss it dulleth me to rhyme.
Ever when that I speak of his falsehéad,
For shame of him my cheekès waxen red,
Algatès[2] they beginnen for to glow;
For redness have I none, right well I know,
In my viságè, for fumés divérse
Of metals, which ye have heard me rehearse,
Consumèd have and wasted my rednéss,
Now take heed of this canon's cursedness.

"Sir," quoth he to the priest, "let your man gon[3]
For quicksilver, that we it had anon;[4]
And let him bringen ounces two or three;
And when he come, as fastè[5] shall ye see
A wondrous thing, which ye saw never ere this."
"Sir," quoth the priest, "it shall be done I wis.[6]"
He bade his servant fetchen him his things,
And he all ready was at his biddíngs,
And went him forth, and came anon again
With his quicksilver, shortly for to sayn;
And took these ounces three to the canoún,
And he them laidè fair and well adown,
And bade the servant coalès[7] for to bring
That he anon might go to hís workíng.

The coals were immediately fetched, and the canon took out a crucible from his bosom, and showed it to the other.

"This instrument," quoth he, "which that thou seest,
Take in thine hand, and put thyself therein
Of this quicksilver an ounce, and here begin
In the name of Christ to wax a philosópher.
There be full fewè to which I would proffer
To shewen them thus much of my sciénce;
For ye shall see here by experiénce
That this quicksilver I will mortify[8]
Right in your sight anon, withouten lie,
And make it as good silver and as fine,
As there is any in your purse or mine,

[1] Ye would think. [2] Always. [3] Go. [4] Have at once.
[5] Quickly. [6] Certainly. [7] Charcoal.
[8] The idea seems to be to *mortify*, to destroy, or effectually as, by natural processes to make *decay*, the quicksilver; which is but in other words to resolve it into its elements, and thus prepare it for new combinations—as silver.

Or ellèswhere, and make it malleáble ;
And ellès holdeth[1] me false, and unable
Amongès folk for ever to appear.
I have a powder here that cost me dear,
Shall make all good, for it is cause of all
My conning,[2] which that I you shewen shall.

Send away your man, and let him be without.

And shut the doorè while we be about
Our privity, that no man us espy
While that we work in this philosophy.
All, as he bade, fulfillèd was in deed.

This same servant anon went out—

And, his mastèr shut the door anon,
And to their labour speedily they gone.
This priest at this cursèd canón's bidding
Upon the fire anon he set this thing,
And blew the fire, and busied him full fast.
And this canón into the croslet[3] cast
A powder,

I know not how it was made, whether of chalk or glass, but it was worthless, with which to blind the priest ; and the canon bade him hasten to lay the coals above the crucible.

"For, in token I thee love,
(Quoth this canón) thine owèn handès two
Shall worken all thing which that here be do."[4]
"*Grand mercy*," quoth the priest, and was full glad,
And couched[5] the coalès as the canon bad.
And while he busy was, this fiendly wretch,
This false canón (the foulè fiend him fetch !)
Out of his bosom took a beechen coal[6]
In which full subtilly was made a hole,

and therein was put an ounce of silver filings, and the hole was stopped with wax to keep the filings in.

And understand that this false snare was not made then, but before, and other things he brought with him, of which I shall tell you more hereafter. He thought to beguile him ere he came there, and so he did before they parted. He would not stop till he had taken him in.

It dulleth me, when that I of him speak ;
On his falsehóod fain would I me awreak

[1] Hold, count. [2] Skill. [3] Crucible. [4] Done. [5] Laid.
[6] A lump of beech-charcoal.

If I wist how, but he is here and there,
He is so variaunt[1] he abides no where.

But taketh heed, now, sirs, for goddès love.
He took his coal,[2] of which I spake above,
And in his hand he bare it privily,
And while the prïest couchèd busily
The coalès, as I toldè you ere this,
This canon saidè, "Friend, ye do amiss;
This is not couchèd as it ought to be,
But soon I shall amenden it," quoth he.
"Now let me meddle therewith but a while,
For of you have I pity, by Saint Gile;
Ye be right hot, I see well how ye sweat,
Have here a cloth, and wipe away the wet."

And whilés that this priest wipèd his face,
This canon took his coal, (I shrew[3] his face!)
And laid it up above on the midward of the croslet,
and blew well afterward,
'Till that the coalès 'gannen fast to burn.'

"Now give us drink," quoth the canon; "all shall be well quickly, I guarantee,
Sittè we down, and let us merry makè."

And when the canon's beechen coal was burnt, all the filings fell out of the hole down into the crucible.

And so it mustè needès by reasón,
Since it so even abovè couchèd was;
But thereof wist the priest nothíng, alas!
He deemed all the coals ylikè good,
For of the sleight he nothing understood.
And when this alchymistre saw his time,
"Rise up, sir priest," quoth he, "and stand by me;
And for I wot well, ingot have ye none,
Go, walketh forth, and bring us a chalk stone,
For I will make it of the samè shape
That is an ingot, if I may have hap.
And bring with you a bowl or else a pan
Full of watér, and ye shall well see than,[4]
How that our businèss shall hap and preve;[5]
And yet, for ye shall have no misbelieve,
Nor wrong conceit of me in your absénce,
I ne will not be out of your presénce,
But go with you, and come with you again."

[1] Of such vagrant habits. [2] Bit of charcoal. [3] Curse.
[4] Then. [5] Succeed—profit.

The chamber doorè, shortly for to sayn,
They openèd and shut, and went their way,
And forth with them they carrïed the key,
And came again withouten any delay.
What should I tarryen all the longè day?
He took the chalk, and shaped it in the wise
Of an ingót, as I shall you devise.

I say, he took out of his own sleeve a plate of silver (evil be his end!), which was but just an ounce weight; and take heed now of his cursed tricks. He shaped his ingot in length and breadth the same, without doubt, as that plate of silver,

So slily, that the priest it not espied;
And in his sleeve again he 'gan it hide;
And from the fire he took up his mattére,
And in the ingot put it with merry cheer;
And in the water-vessel he it cast,
When that him list, and bade the priest as fast,
"Look what there is; put in thine hand and grope;
Thou shaltè find there silver, as I hope."
What, devil of hellè! should it ellès be?
Shaving of silver, silver is, pardè.

He put his hand in, and took up a teine[1]
Of silver fine; and glad in every vein
Was this priest, when he saw that it was so;
"Goddès blessïng, and his mothér's alsó,
And allè hallows,[2] have ye, sir canón,"
Saidè this priest, "and I their malison;
But, and ye vouchèsafe to teachen me
This noble craft and this subtílity,
I will be yours in all that ever I may."
Quoth this canón, "Yet will I make assay
The second time, that ye may taken heed,
And be expert of this, and in your need
Another day assay in mine absénce
This discipline, and this crafty sciénce.

Let us take another ounce," quoth he then,

"Of quicksilver, withouten wordès mo',
And do therewith as ye have done ere this
With that othér, which that now silver is."
The priest him busieth in all that he can,
To do as this canón this cursed man,
Commandeth him, and fastè blew the fire,
For to come to th' effect of his desire.
And this canón right in the meanè while
All ready was this priest eft[3] to beguile.

[1] Plate. [2] Holies, Saints. [3] Again.

And for appearance sake, in his hand bare

A hollow stickè (take keep, and beware !),
In th' end of which an ouncè and no more
Of silver limaile[1] put was, as before
Was in his coal, and stoppèd with wax well,

in order to keep in every bit of the filings.

And while the priest was engaged, the canon with his stick began to address himself to him anon, and his powder cast in as he did before.

——— the devil out of his skin
Him turn, I pray to God, for his falsehêde,
For he was ever false in word and deed.

And with his stick above the crucible, that was arranged with this false contrivance,

He stirreth the coalès, till relenten 'gan
The wax against the fire, as every man,
But he a fool be, wot well it must need ;

and all that was in the stick went out, and fell hastily in the crucible.

Now, good sirs, what will ye better than well ? When that this priest was thus beguiled again, supposing only truth,

He was so glad, that I can not express
In no mannére his mirth and his gladnéss,
And to the canon he proffèred eftsoon
Body and goods ; " Yea," quoth the canon, " soon :
Though poor I be, crafty[2] thou shalt me find,
I warnè thee yet is there more behind.
Is there any copper here within ?" said he.
" Yea, sir," quoth the priest ; " I trow there be !

Else go buy us some, and that quickly. Now, good sir, go forth thy way, and hasten thee." He went and came back with the copper, and the canon took it in his hand.

And of that copper weighed out but an ounce.
Too simple is my tonguè to pronounce,
As minister of my wit, the doubleness
Of this canón, root of all cursedness.
He seemèd friendly to them that knew him nought,
But he was fiendly, both in work and thought.

[1] Filings.

[2] Wise, deeply skilled. But was not the modern meaning already sufficiently known to enable the rascally Canon to enjoy his joke, as well as his ill-gotten gains ? The whole passage is executed in a spirit of the most subtle humour.

It wearieth me to tell of his falsenéss;
And nathèlèss yet will I it express,
To that intent men may beware thereby,
And for none other causè truëly.

He put this copper into the crucible, and on the fire set it immediately,

And cast in powder, and made the priest to blow,
And in his working for to stoopen low
As he did erst,[1] and all was but a jape[2];
Right as him list the priest he made his ape.[3]
And afterward in th' ingot he it cast,
And in the pannè put it at the last
Of water, and in he put his owen hand,
And in his sleeve, as ye beforen hand
Heardè me tell,

he had a silver plate; he slily took it out (this cursed wretch!) the priest unwitting of his false craft, and he left it in the pan's bottom.

And in the water rumbled[4] to and fro.
And, wondrous privily, took up alsó
The copper teinè (not knowíng this priest)
And hiddè it, and hent him by the breast,
And to him spake, and thus said in his game,
"Stoopeth adown; by God, ye be to blame,
Helpeth me now as I did you whilere:
Put in your hand, and looketh what is there."

This priest took up his silver teine anon;
And thennè said the canon, "Let us gone,
With these three teinès which that we have wrought,
To some goldsmíth, and weet[5] if they be aught;
For by my faith I n'ouldè for mine hood,
But if they weren silver fine and good,
And that as swithè[6] provèd shall it be."

Unto the goldsmith with those teinès three,
They went, and put these teinès in assay
To fire and hammer. Might no man say Nay,
But that they weren as them ought to be.

This 'sotted[7] priest, who was gladdér than he?
Was never bird gladder against the day,
Ne nightingale, in the seasón of May
Was never none, that list bettér to sing,
Ne lady lustier in carolling.

[1] Before. [2] Trick. [3] Befooled him.
[4] Fumbled. [5] Learn. [6] Quickly. [7] Besotted.

Or, for to speak of love and womanhede,
Ne knight in armès done[1] a hardy deed,
To standen in grace of his lady dear,
Than had this priest this sorry craft to lere[2];
And to the canon thus he spake and said;
"For love of God, that for us allè dey'd,
And as I may deserve it unto you,
What shall this rêceipt costè? telleth now."
"By 'r Lady," quoth this canon, "it is dear;
I warn you well, for save I and a frere,
In Engèland there can no man it make."

"No matter," said the priest. "Now, sir, for God's sake tell me, I pray you, what I shall pay?"

"Ywis," quoth he, "it is full dear I say.
Sir, at a word, if that you lust it have,
Ye shall pay forty pound, so God me save;

and were it not for the friendship that ye did ere this to me, ye should pay more certainly."

The priest fetched anon the sum of forty pounds of nobles, and took them to the canon for this receipt: All his working was but deceit and fraud.

"Sir priest," he said, "I wish to have no loss of my craft; I would it were kept close. As ye love me keep it secret.

For if men knewen all my subtlety,
By God, they woulden have so great envy
To me, because of my philosophy,
I should be dead; there were no other way."

"God forbid it!" said the priest "Yet had I rather spend all the goods I have (and I were mad else), than that ye should fall into such mischief."

"For your good will, sir, ye have good proof that it is deserved," quoth the canon, "and—Farewell. *Grand Mercy.*" He went his way, and never after that time did the priest see him. And when that this priest made essay, at such time as he would—

Of this receipt, farewell! it would not be,
Lo, thus bejapèd and beguil'd was he.

Thus does this canon introduce himself, to bring folk to destruction.—Consider, sirs, how in each estate there is warfare betwixt men and gold to such an extent that there is hardly any gold. This multiplying so blinds many a one,

[1] Who has done. [2] Learn.

That in good faith I trowè that it be
The causè greatest of such scarcity,
Philosophers speaken so mistily
In this craft, that men cannot come thereby
For any wit that men have now-a-days:
They may well chatteren as do these jays,

and in their terms set their pleasures and care;

But to their purpose shall they ne'er attain.
A man may lightly learn, if he have aught,
Tó multiply, and bring his goods to nought.

Lo, such a lucre is in this pleasant game; it will turn a man's wit to sorrow,

And empty also great and heavy purses;
And maken folk for to purchásen curses
Of them that have thereto their goods ylent.
Oh, fie for shamè! they that have been brent,[1]
Alas! can they not flee the firès heat?

Ye that use it, I advise to let it alone,

Lest ye lose all; for bet' than never is late:
Never to thriven were too long a date:
Though ye prowl aye, ye shall it never find.
Ye be as bold as is Bayárd the blind,
That blundereth forth,

and peril weigheth not:

He is as bold to run against a stone
As for to go besidès[2] in the way:
So faren ye that multiply, I say.
If that your eyen cannot see aright,
Look that your mindè lackè not his sight.
For though ye look never so broad and stare

ye shall not win a mite by that traffic, but waste all that ye may seize or plunder.

Withdraw the fire, lest it too fastè brenne[3];
Meddleth no morè with that art, I mean,
For if ye do, your thrift is gone full clean:

And I will also immediately tell you what philosophers say in this matter.

Lo, thus saith Arnold of the newè town,[4]
As his Rosáry maketh mentïon;

[1] Burnt. [2] On one side. [3] Burn. [4] Arnoldus de Villa nova.

He saith right thus, withouten any lie,
"There may no man mercúry mortify,
But it be with his brother's knowledging."

Lo, how that he whichè first said this thing
Of philosóphers' father was, Hermés;
He saith, how that the dragon doubtèlese
Ne dieth not, but if that he be slain
With his brothér:

And this is to say, he understood by the Dragon—mercury, and by his brother—brimstone, both which were drawn from the sun and the moon. And therefore, said he, take heed of my saying, "Let no man busy himself to seek this art, unless he can understand the intentions and the speech of philosophers. And if he do, he is an ignorant man.

For this sciénce and this conníng," (quoth he,)
"Is of the secret of secréts pardé."[1]

Also there was a disciple of Plató,
That on a timè said his master to,
As his book senïor will bear witnéss,
And this was his demand in soothfastness,
"Tell me the name of thilkè privy stone."

And Plato answered unto him anon;
"Takè the stone that Titanos men name,"
"Which is that?" quoth he, "Magnesia is the same,"

Saidè Plató: "Yea, sir, and is it thus;
That is *ignotum per ignotius*.[2]
Which is magnesïa, good sir, I pray?"
"It is a water that is made, I say,
Of elementès fourè," quoth Plató.
"Tell me the rootè, good sir," quoth he tho,[3]
"Of that watér, if that it be your will."

"Nay, nay," quoth Plato, "certain that I n'ill.[4]
The philosóphers sworn were every one
That they ne should discover it unto none,
Ne in no book it write in no mannére,
For unto Christ it is so lefe[5] and dear,
That he will not that it discovered be,

except when it pleaseth his Deity to inspire men with the knowledge, and also to defend those whom it so pleaseth him to inspire. Lo this is the end.

[1] "He alludes to a treatise entitled *Secreta Secretarum*, which was supposed to contain the sum of Aristotle's instructions to Alexander." —*Tyrrwhitt.*

[2] The unknown (explained) by the more unknown. [3] Then.
[4] Will not. [5] Pleasant.

Then thus conclude I. Since that God of Heaven will not that the philosophers tell how that a man may come unto this stone, I advise as for the best—to let it go.

> For whoso maketh God his adversáry,
> As for to worken any thing contráry
> To his will, certes never shall he thrive,
> Though that he multiply, term of his live.
> And there a point; for ended is my Tale.

God send every true man a remedy for his trouble.

REMARKS ON THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE.

WHEN Chaucer had settled as the leading idea of his plan for the 'Canterbury Tales,' that a party of pilgrims should journey from London to Thomas à Becket's shrine, and tell each a story by the way, one objection would naturally occur to him as an artist. With all the advantages of the plan, there would be apt to be produced a sense of formality and tediousness by the continuance of an unbroken stream of narrative whose end was not only distinct but exactly defined—therefore leaving nothing to the imagination. In part this objection was got rid of by the remarks and conversation of the pilgrims upon each Tale at its conclusion; and as Harry Bailly, the host, was here to fill a conspicuous place, there was sure to be animation, and an unfailing fund of good humour and mirth to fall back upon and enjoy at each of the intervals in question.

But there still lacked incident to break up the too even tenor of the pilgrims' way. Accordingly, Chaucer introduced, in the happiest manner and with the happiest effect, the two characters of the Canon and Yeoman.

It soon appears that the Yeoman had seen the pilgrims ride out of the hostelry, and told his master, the Canon; who had hurried after the pilgrims in such fiery haste, that,

> it was joyè for to see him sweat.

Of course the pilgrims' attention is arrested by the circumstance,—they are interested, and presently become still more so as they learn the character of the master from his own servant—as they see the former slink off from them—and as they hear described in the fullest detail the rogueries of the Alchemists by one who has been behind the scenes, as shown in pages 120 to 125.

Thus did the poet-artist work. How has this portion of his work been appreciated?

"The introduction," says Tyrrwhitt, "of the Canon's Yeoman to tell a tale at a time when so many of the original characters remain to be called upon, appears a little extraordinary. It should seem that some sudden resentment had determined Chaucer to interrupt the regular course of his work, in order to insert a satire against the Alchemists. That their pretended science was much cultivated about this time, and produced its usual evils, may fairly be inferred from an Act which was passed soon after, 5 Hen. IV. c. 4, to make it felony to multiply gold or silver, or to use the art of multiplication."

Mr. Hippesley (in his 'Early English Literature') remarks in the same strain:—"In the year 1405 an Act was passed which made it felonie to multiplie gold and silver, or to use the art of multiplication. If we may believe that Chaucer's life was extended beyond that year, it will not appear improbable that he should have inserted this digression from his original plan, in accordance with the general feeling of the nation on the subject."

Is not this another instance of the fault we have before complained of in Chaucer's admirers, from Spenser downwards? They take him for granted—not study him; and so, to a serious extent, really grow "blind" to his excellences, by dwelling in a kind of vague idea of his "excess of light."[1]

To the masterly exposure of the tricks of the Alchemists Chaucer has given, we shall merely add a few words illustrative of the various other modes they resorted to in the endeavour to cheat their dupes. They soldered gold and silver together, and whitened the gold side with mercury to make that look like silver too, then dropped the whole into the transmuting liquid, where the mercury was dissipated, and, lo! the eager neophyte found a part of his silver changed into a more valuable metal. Again, nails were made of two pieces, one of iron, the other of gold, coated so as to look like iron, and both soldered together; the nails were then dipped into the magic pot, and they too came out with half their baser nature changed into the best virgin gold. A third method was to place at the bottom of the crucible preparations of gold, so skilfully concealed that the crucible appeared empty when examined at the commencement of the experiment.

[1] But Dr. Furnivall and others still hold Tyrrwhitt's view. They contend that the introduction of such an unpoetic subject and story into the Tales is probably due to Chaucer himself having been swindled by some alchemist. The Tale is evidently a late one.

THE MANCIPLE'S TALE.

WHEN Phœbus dwelt here in this earth adown,
As oldè bookès maken mentïoun,
He was the mostè lusty bachelor
Of all this world, and eke the best archér.
He slew Phitón the serpent, as he lay
Sleeping against the sun upon a day;
And many another noble worthy deed
He with his bowè wrought, as men may read.
Playen he could on every minstrelsy,
And singen, that it was a melody
To hearen of his clearè voice the soun'.
Certes the king of Thebès, Amphioun,
That with his singing wallèd that citý,
Could never singen half so well as he.

He was also the seemliest man that ever lived. What needeth it to describe his features? In this world there is not one so fair alive. He was also full of gentleness, honour, and perfect worth.

This Phœbus, that was flower of bachelerie,
As well in freedom as in chivalry,

for his amusement, and in sign of victory over Phiton, as the story tells us, was wont to bear a bow in his hand.

Now had this Phœbus in his house a crow,
Which in a cage he fostered many a day,
And taught it speaking, as men do a jay.
White was this crow as is a snow-white swan;
And counterfeit the speech of every man
He couldè, when he shouldè tell a tale.
There is within this world no nightingale
Ne couldè by a hundred thousand del[1]
Singen so wondrous merrily, and well.
Now had this Phœbus in his house a wife
Which that he lovèd morè than his life;

[1] Part.

And night and day did ever diligence
Her for to please and do her reverence :

save only, if I say the truth, that he was jealous ; and would have kept her safe ; for he was loth to be deceived, and so is every one in such matters. But all for nothing. It availeth not. A good wife should not be kept under watch ; and truly the labour is vain to try to keep an evil one.

This worthy Phœbus does all that he can to please her, believing that through so pleasing her, and on account of his government,

That no man should have put him from her grace.
But God it wot, there may no man embrace—
As to distrain[1]—a thing which that natûre
Hath naturally set in a creatûre.
Take any bird, and put him in a cage,
And do all thine intent, and thy courâge
To foster it tenderly with meat and drink,
With all the dainties that thou canst bethink,
And keep it all so kindly as thou may ;
Although his cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet had this bird, by twenty thousand fold,
Lever[2] in forest that is wild and cold,
Go eaten wormès, and such wretchedness
For ever this bird will do his busïness
To 'scape out of his cage when that he may :
His liberty the bird desireth aye.
Let take a cat and foster him with milk
And tender flesh, and make his bed of silk ;
And let him see a mouse go by the wall,
Anon he waiveth milk and flesh and all,
And every dainty which is in that house :
Such appetite hath he to eat the mouse.

Lo, here hath Nature her dominion ; and appetite banisheth discretion. . . . . So

That we can in nothing have pleasânce
That soundeth unto virtue any while.

This Phœbus, who thought not of guile, for all his jollity, was deceived. His wife loved another, a man of little reputation, worthless in comparison to Phœbus.

More harm it is ; it happ'neth often so,
Of which there cometh bothè harm and woe.

And while Phœbus was absent, his wife sends for her lemman.

[1] Seize or compel by force. [2] Rather.

Her lemman? certes this is knavish speech.
Forgive it me, and that I you beseech.
The wisè Plato saith, as ye may read,
The word must needs accorden with the deed,
If men shall tellen properly a thing,
The word must 'cordè[1] with the thing workíng.
I am a boisterous man, right thus say I;
There is no differencè truëly
Betwixt a wife that is of high degree
(If of her body díshonest she be),
And any poorè wench othér than this
(If it so be they worken both amiss),
But that the gentle in estate above,
She shall be cleped[2] his lady and his love;
And, for that other is a poor womán,
She shall be cleped his wench and his lemmán:

. . . . .

Right so betwixt a title-less tyránt
And an outláw, or else a thief erránt;
The same I say, there is no difference
(To Alexander told was this sentènce),
But, for the tyrant is of greater might,
By force of menie for to slay downright,
And burnen house and home, and make all plain,
Lo, therefore is he cleped a capitain;
And, for an outlaw hath but small menïe,[3]
And may not do so great a harm as he,
Ne bring a country to so great mischíef,
Men clepen him an outlaw or a thief.

. . . . .

When Phœbus came home,

This crowè sung cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo!
"What? bird," quoth Phœbus, "what song sing'st thou now?
Ne were thou wont so merrily to sing,
That to my heart it was a réjoicing,
To hear thy voice? alas! what song is this?"
"By God—," quoth he, "I singè not amiss.
Phœbus (quoth he) for all thy worthiness,
For all thy beauty, and thy gentleness;
For all thy songès, and thy minstrelsy;
For all thy waiting, blearèd is thine eye,
With one of little reputatïon,
Nor worth to thee, as in comparison,
The mountnance[4] of a gnat, so may I thrive,
thy wife has played false to thee."
Then Phœbus began to turn away. He thought his woful

[1] Accord. [2] Called. [3] Retinue, following. [4] The value.

heart was burst in two. He bent his bow, and set an arrow in it.

And in his ire he hath his wife yslain :
This is th' effect, there is no more to sayn.
For sorrow of which he brake his minstrelsy,
Both harp and lute, gittern, and sautèríe ;
And eke he brake his arrows, and his bow :
And after that, thus spake he to the crow :
"Traitor," quoth he, "with tongue of scorpïon
Thou hast me brought to my confusïon ;
Alas, that I was both ! why n' ere I dead ?
O deerè wife, O gem of lustyhead,
That were to me so sad,[1] and eke so true,
Now liest thou dead, with facè pale of hue,
Full guiltèless, that durst I swear ywis.

O, hasty hand, to do so foul a wrong ! O, troubled wit ! O, reckless ire, that, unadvised, smitest the guiltless. O, Distrust, full of false suspicion, where was thy discretion and thy wit ?

O, let every man beware of rashness, and believe nothing without strong witness. Smite not too soon, ere you know why ; and be advised well and surely before you act upon ire and suspicion. Alas ! a thousand folk hath hasty rashness undone, and brought them into the mire. Alas ! for sorrow I will slay myself."

And to the crow, "O, falsè thief," said he ;
"I will thee quit anon thy falsè tale.
Thou sung whilom, as any nightingale :
Now shalt thou, falsè thief, thy song foregone,
And eke thy whitè feathers, every one ;
Never in all thy life ne shalt thou speak ;
Thus shall men on a falsè thief be wreak.
Thou and thine offspring ever shall be blake,
Ne never sweetè noisè shall ye make,
But ever cry against tempést and rain,
In token, that through thee my wife was slain."
And to the crow he start, and that anon,
And pulled his whitè feathers every one,
And made him black, and reft him all his song,
And eke his speech,

and flung him out of the door to the devil. And for this cause are all crows black.

Lordlings, by this example, I pray you, never tell a man in all your life that his wife has wronged him.

He will you haten mortally certaín.
Dan Solomon, as wisè clerkès sain,
Teacheth a man to keep his tonguè well ;
But, as I said, I am not textuel.

[1] Steadfast.

But nathèless thus taughtè me my dame ;
"My son, think on the crow, in Goddès name.
My son, keep well thy tongue, and keep thy friend ;
A wicked tongue is worsè than a fiend :
My sonnè, from a fiend men may them bless.
My son, God of his endèless goodness
Wallèd a tongue with teeth, and lippès eke,
For man shall him advisè what he speak.
My son, full often for too muchel speech
Hath many a man been spilt,[1] as clerkès teach.

. . .

My son, thy tonguè shouldest thou restrain
At allè time but when thou dost thy pain
To speak of God in honour and prayére.

. . .

Right as a sword forcutteth and forcarveth
An arm a-two, my dearè son, right so
A tonguè cutteth friendship all a two.
A jangler is to God abominable.

. . .

The Fleming saith, and learn it, if thee lest,
That little jangling causeth muchel rest.
My son, if thou no wicked word hast sayd,
Thee there not dreaden for to be betrayed,[2]
But he that hath missaid, I dare well sayn,
He may by no way clepe[3] his word again.
Thing that is said is said, and forth it go'th,
Though him repent, or be him never so loth,
He is his thrall, to whom that he hath said
A tale, of which he is now evil paid.
My son, beware, and be no author new
Of tidings, whether they be false or true ;
Where so thou come, amongès high or low,
Keep well thy tongue, and think upon the crow."

REMARKS ON THE MANCIPLE'S TALE.

THE dramatic correspondence of each of the Canterbury Tales to the character of its narrator is tolerably evident in most portions of the poet's great work ; and where this correspondence is not so readily conspicuous, it is sure to be still there—latent—deep, perhaps, but still an unquestionable fact. The Manciple is a very "respectable," gentle sort of a personage—learned, or belonging to one of the most learned of bodies—a

[1] Killed. [2] Ruined. [3] Call.

little addicted to practices that help rather to fill his purse than develop his moral nature—yet, for that very reason, moral and sententious in his habits and conversation, the better to hide the defect; and, lastly, possessing a kind of quiet subtle humour, to be felt rather than described—just such a humour as one might fancy would grow up in the mind of a man who was accustomed to make alike lords and lawyers his instruments, while appearing to be entirely their submissive, faithful creature, and steward. We can fancy him often chuckling secretly over just such a thought as Chaucer has expressed in the description of the Manciple in the prologue:

> Now is not that of God, a full fair grace,
> That such a lewèd[1] mannès wit should pass
> The wisdom of a heap of learned men?

And the Tale throughout illustrates the same qualities. A more respectable hero than Phœbus, or a subject more entirely belonging to what is called learning, than the story which had been told by innumerable writers, from Ovid downwards, no story-teller need desire, while its consequence,

> And for this cause be allè crowès black;

and the sententious, sermonizing, yet withal shrewd, worldly, and temporising sort of morality drawn from the Tale,[2] afford full opportunity for the display of the Manciple's humour and moral philosophy. In a word, the Tale, like himself, consists of a small but sly and concentrated *substance*, which he manages to magnify into a stately and most imposing shadow.

There is but one passage of such striking poetical excellence as to make us wonder how it got into and safely out of his head, and *that* he has *borrowed* from a story previously told. The passage—

> Take any bird and put it in a cage,

is but a repetition, with alterations, of the one in the 'Squire's Tale,' commencing,

> As birdès do, that men it in cages feed.

As all students of Chaucer know, he often repeats himself; witness his four times use of his line, "For pity runneth soon in gentle heart."—Skeats 'Legend of Good Women,' pp. 148-503.

The Manciple's Tale is from Ovid's 'Metamorphoses.' French, English, and Greek versions, with Persian and Panjabi Analogues, are given in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues,' pp. 439-480.

[1] Ignorant. [2] This points to its writing late in Chaucer's life.

THE DOCTOR'S TALE.[1]

THERE was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knight, that clepèd[2] was Virginius,
Fulfill'd of honours and of worthiness,
And strong of friendès, and of great richés,
This knight a daughter haddè by his wife,
No children had he more in all his life.
Fair was this maid in excellent beauty
Aboven every wight that men may see:
For Nature hath with sovereign diligence
Yformèd her in so great excellence,
As though she wouldè say, "Lo, I, Natúre,
Thus can I form and paint a creätúre,
When that me lust; who can me counterfeit?
Pygmalion? No, though he forge and beat,
Or 'grave, or paintè: for I dare well say'n
Apelles, Xeuxis, shoulden work in vain,
Either to 'grave, or paint, or forge, or beat,
If they presumèd me to counterfeit.
For He that is the Former principál,
Hath makèd me his vicar-general,
To form and painten earthly creätúre
Right as me lust; all thing is in my cure
Under the mooné, that may wane and wax.
And for my workè nothing will I axe;
My Lord and I be fully at accord;
I made her to the worship of my Lord;
So do I all mine other creätúres,
What colour that they have, or what figúres:"—
This seemeth me that Nature wouldè say.

Fourteen years of age was this maid in whom Nature had such pride; for just as she can paint a rose red, and a lily white, so with such colours she hath painted this noble creature, ere she was born, upon her free limbs, wherever such colours ought to be. And Phœbus hath dyed her great tresses like unto the streams of his burnished heat.

[1] This Tale, with its moralizing and advice to damsels' duennas, see page 430, is no doubt a late one, like the Manciple's. [2] Called.

And if that excellent was her beautý,
A thousand fold more virtuous was she.

There lacked no quality in her worthy of discreet praise. She was chaste in spirit as in body; a virgin flower, who was humble, and patient, and measured in her array and bearing. In her abstinent, temperate answers she was always discreet. Though she were as wise as Pallas, I dare to say that her eloquence was plain and womanly: she had no counterfeited terms to seem wise; but in accordance with her rank,

She spake, and all her wordès more and less
Sounding in virtue and in gentleness.
Shamefac'd she was in maiden's shamefac'dness,
Constant in heart, and ever in busïness
To drive her out of idle sluggardy.
Bacchus had of her mouth no mastery;
For wine and youthè do Venús increase,
As men in fire will casten oil and grease.
And of her owen virtue unconstrain'd
She hath full oftentimè sickness feign'd,
For that she wouldè flee the company
Where likely was to treaten of follý,
As is at feastès, revels, and at dances,
That be occasïons of dalliances.
Such thingès maken children for to be
Too soonè ripe and bold, as men may see,
Which is full perilous, and hath been yore:
For all too soonè may she learnen lore
Of boldènessè when she is a wife.

And ye mistresses, in your old age, who have lords' daughters in governance, take not displeasure from my words: think that ye be set in governance of lords' daughters for two things only, either because ye have kept your own honesty, or else because, having fallen in frailty, ye have fully forsaken such evil courses evermore: therefore for Christ's sake look that ye slacken not to teach them virtue.

A stealer of venison, who has entirely left his gluttony, and his old craft,

Can keep a forest best of any man:
Now keep them well, for if ye will ye can.

Look well that ye assent unto no vice, lest ye be damned for your wicked purposes. Who doth so is certainly a traitor; and mark what I say, of all treason, the

sovereign pestilence
Is when a wight betrayeth innocence.

Fathers and mothers, yours is the charge of children; beware

that they perish not by example of your living, or by your neglect in chastisement. If they do ye shall suffer for it.

Under a shepherd soft and negligent,
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent.[1]

This maid kept herself, she needed no mistress.

For in her living, maidens mighten read,
As in a book, every good word and deed.
That 'longeth to a maiden virtuous.
She was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame out sprung on every side—
Both of her beauty and her bounty wide:
That through the land they praisèd her each one
That lovèd virtue, save envý alone,
That sorry is of other mannès weal,
And glad is of his sorrow and unheal.[2]

On a day this maiden went in the town towards a temple with her dear mother, as is the custom of young maids.

Now there was a justice in that town who was also the governor of the country. And it so befell that he cast his eyes upon the maid, and earnestly observed her as she came forth by the spot where he stood.

Anon his heartè changèd, and his mood,
So was he caught with beauty of this maid;
And to himself full privily he said,
"This maiden shall be mine for any man."
Anon the fiend into his heartè ran,
And taught him suddenly, that he by sleight
This maiden to his purpose winnen might.
For certès by no force, ne by no meed,
Him thought he was not able for to speed;
For she was strong of friendès, and eke she
Confirmèd was in such soveréign bounty
That well he wist he might her never win,
As for to make her with her body sin.

So after great deliberation he sent into the town for a clerk whom he knew to be subtle and bold, and told his tale unto him secretly, and made him engage to tell it to no creature; and if he did he should lose his head. And when this cursed counsel was agreed to, the judge was glad and made great cheer for him, and gave him dear and precious gifts.

When the whole conspiracy was shaped from point to point, how that his will should be performed with all subtlety as ye shall after hear, the clerk, who was called Claudius, goes home. This false judge, who was named Appius (for it is no fable, but

[1] Torn to pieces. [2] Unhealth, ill-being.

an historical and well known thing, the story is true beyond doubt)—this false judge. . . . soon after on a day, sat in his consistory, as was his wont, and gave judgment upon sundry cases. The false clerk then came forth and said, "Lord, if it be your pleasure, do me right upon this piteous bill, in which I complain of Virginius; who if he will say it is not so, I will prove it, and find good witnesses that the bill expresses the truth."

The judge answered, "Of this in his absence I may not give definitive sentence: let him be called, and I will gladly hear. Thou shalt have right and no wrong."

Virginius came to know the judge's pleasure, and then immediately the cursed bill was read; the meaning of it ye shall hear:—

"To you, my lord Sir Appius so dear,
Sheweth your poorè servant Claudius,
How that a knight callèd Virginius,
Against the law, against all equity,
Holdeth, express against the will of me,
My servant, which that is my thrall by right,
Which from mine house was stolen on a night
Whilès she was full young; that will I preve[1]
By witness, lord, so that it you not grieve;
She is his daughter nought, what so he say.
Wherefore to you, my lord the judge, I pray,
Yield me my thrall that, if it be your will:"
Lo, this was all the sentence of the bill.

Virginius began to look upon the clerk. But hurriedly, before he had told his tale, and proved as a knight should, and also by many witnesses, that all that his adversary had said was false, the cursed judge would not wait a moment—nor hear a word more from Virginius, but gave his judgment.

"I deem[2] anon this clerk his servant have,
Thou shalt no longer in thine house her save.
Go bring her forth and put her in our ward.
The clerk shall have his thrall; thus I award"
And when this worthy knight, Virginius,
Through the assent of this judge, Appius,
Mustè by force his dearè daughter given
Unto the judge, in sinfulness to liven;
He goeth him home, and set him in his hall,
And let anon his dearè daughter call;[3]
And with a facè dead as ashen cold
Upon her humble face he 'gan behold,

[1] Prove. [2] I doom, judge. [3] Caused her to be called.

With father's pity striking through his heart
All would he from his purpose not convert.[1]
"Daughter," quoth he, "Virginia by thy name,
There be two wayès, either death or shame,
That thou must suffer; alas that I was bore!
For never thou deservedest wherefore
To dien with a sword or with a knife.
O dearè daughter, ender of my life
Which I have fostered up with such pleasánce,
That thou were never out of rémembrance;
O daughter, which that art my lastè woe
And in this life my lastè joy also;
O gem of chastity, in patïence
Take thou thy death, for this is my sentènce;
For love and not for hate thou must be dead,
My piteous hand must smiten off thine head.
Alas, that ever Appius thee say![2]
Thus hath he falsely judged thee to-day."

And then he told her the whole case.

"O mercy, dearè father!" quoth this maid.
And with that word she both her armès laid
About his neck, as she was wont to do;
(The tearès burst out of her eyen two)
And saidè, "Goodè father, shall I die?
Is there no grace? is there no remedy?"
No certain, dearè daughter mine," quoth he.
"Then give me leavè, father mine," quoth she,
"My death for to complain a little space:
For, pardè, Jephtha gave his daughter grace
For to complain, ere he her slew, alas!
And God it wot, nothing was her trespáss,
But that she ran her father first to see,
To welcome him with great solemnity."
And with that word she fell aswoon anon;
And after, when her swooning was agone,
She riseth up, and to her father said:
"Blessed be God, that I shall die a maid.
Give me my death, ere that I havè shame.
Do with your child your will, a[3] Goddès name."
And with that word she prayed him full oft,
That with his sword he shouldè smite her soft;
And with that word aswoonè down she fell.
Her father, with full sorrowful heart and fell[4]
Her head off smote, and by the top it hent,[5]
And to the judge began it to present
As he sat yet in doom in cónsistóry.

And when the judge saw it, he bade them take Virginius and

[1] Though he would not change his purpose. [2] Saw.
[3] In. [4] Fell, purpose. [5] Held.

hang him instantly. But immediately a thousand people thrust in to save the knight, for pity and grief, for the iniquity was soon known. The people had suspicion in this matter, from the clerk's manner of making his claim, that it was done by the assent of Appius: they knew his vice. They go to Appius, and cast him into a prison immediately. And there he slew himself. Claudius was doomed to be hung on a tree; but that Virginius, of his pity, prayed for him, so he was exiled.

REMARKS ON THE DOCTOR'S TALE.

ALTHOUGH Chaucer expressly names Livy as his authority for the version he adopts of the well-known and tragic story of 'Virginius,' it is curious how widely he has departed from the original; and for once, be it said with all due reverence, not to the advantage either of the Tale or the cause of historic truth. We refer to his entire omission of the character of Icilius, the lover of Virginia, whose fidelity and manly courage and high and noble spirit made him in every way worthy of his position among this trio of illustrious unfortunates. Thus when Virginius was first seized in the forum, where, in sheds, the schools of learning were held, and was taken, during the clamour that ensued, to the tribunal of Appius, the rumour of the startling incident that had occurred presently roused Icilius, who with Virginius's uncle, Numitorius, hurried to the spot, forced a way through the crowd, and loudly raised his voice in remonstrance. He was told the sentence had passed that the claimant should keep possession of Virginia until the arrival of Virginius. Of course the whole policy of Appius was at once apparent; and the half-frenzied lover burst out into the following indignant and impassioned appeal:—

"Appius, you must drive me hence with the sword before you shall accomplish in silence what you wish to be concealed. This young woman I intend to wed, and expect to find in her a lawful and chaste wife. Call together, then, even all the lictors of your colleagues, order the rods and axes to be got ready; the spouse of Icilius shall not remain in any other place than her father's house. Though you have taken from us the protection of tribunes, and an appeal to the Roman people, the two bulwarks which secured our liberty, yet there has been no grant made to your lust of absolute dominion over our wives and daughters. Vent your fury on our persons and our lives; let chastity, at least, find safety. If any violence is offered to

her, I shall appeal for succour to the citizens now present in behalf of my spouse ; Virginius will appeal to the soldiers in behalf of his only daughter ; and all of us to the gods, and to all mankind ; nor shall you ever carry that sentence into effect while we have life to prevent it. I charge you, Appius, consider again and again to what lengths you are proceeding : let Virginius, when he comes, determine what measures he will pursue in regard to his daughter : only of this I would have him assured, that if he submits to this man's claim of obtaining the custody of her, he must seek another match for his daughter. As for me, in vindication of the liberty of my spouse, I will forfeit my life sooner than my honour."

The effect of this appeal was visible in the growing fury of the multitude ; and Appius saw that he must in some degree avoid—by submitting to—the storm. So he consented that Virginia should be bailed ; and Icilius, as defendant in the cause, was called upon for sureties. He, however, delayed, thinking to give more time to the messenger he had despatched to the camp to fetch Virginius ; and the multitude, mistaking his motive, and fearing he was at a loss, held up their hands as if with one impulse, and cried out they were ready to be sureties for Icilius ! "To them he replied," says Livy, "tears at the same time filling his eyes, 'I am thankful for your goodness ; to-morrow I will claim your assistance ; at present I have sufficient sureties.'"

That morrow came that was to witness one of the most sad but heroic acts the long history of the world might afford—Virginia was stabbed by her own father !—and as the latter made his way through all assembled, brandishing the bloody knife of sacrifice, until he had gained the outer gate, with a devoted body of followers, whence he fled to the camp, "Icilius and Numitorius raised up the lifeless body, and exposed it to the view of the people, deploring the villainy of Appius, the fatal beauty of the maiden, and the necessity which had urged the father to the act. The matrons who followed joined their exclamations—'Were these the consequences of rearing children—were these the rewards of chastity?' with other mournful reflections such as are suggested by grief to women, and which, from the greater sensibility of their tender minds, are always the most affecting. The discourse of the men, and particularly Icilius, turned entirely on their being deprived of the protection of tribunes, and, consequently, of appeals to the people, and on the indignities thrown upon them all."

And thus, while Virginius stirred up the hearts of his fellow-soldiers in the camp by the awful tale he was the first to bring them news of, and to which his ghastly and sudden appearance

among them must have added tenfold force, Icilius raised up in the very heart of the city itself an opposition so formidable, that Appius was driven to seek for safety in concealment. Then the army presently marched to the city—the bereaved lover and father again met—the decemvirs, including Appius, were, by order of the senate, compelled to resign their oppressive and in some measure usurped power—and tribunes or magistrates of and for the people were to be elected as of old : among these the foremost were Virginius, Icilius, and Numitorius.

And then, in prison, and hopeless of escape, Appius anticipated his fate by suicide.

SELECTIONS

FROM

THE OTHER CANTERBURY TALES.

In the following selections, the objects sought are to furnish the reader with the means of enjoying Chaucer's rich delineation of comic character, and as much of his consummate management of comic narrative, incident, and plot, as are compatible with the expurgation of all those grossnesses which, however excusable in the fourteenth century, are not for a moment to be tolerated beyond the library of the student in the nineteenth.

THE MILLER'S TALE.

THERE was once dwelling in Oxford a rich miser, who took guests to board. He was a carpenter by his craft. With him there dwelled a poor scholar learned in the arts, but whose whole fancy was turned towards learning astrology. He could discover certain conclusions, if interrogated in certain hours—when there should be drought or rain, or if men asked him what should happen, of everything.

This clerk was clepèd handy Nicholas ;
Of dernè[1] love he could[2] and of soláce ;
And therewith he was sly, and full privý
And like a maiden meekè for to see.
A chamber had he in that hostelry
Alone, withouten any company,
Full fetisly ydight with herbès sote.[3]
And he himself was sweet as is the root
Of liquorice, or any setèwale.[4]
His alma-gest,[5] and bookès great and small,
His astrolabè, 'longing to his art,
His augrim[6] stonès, laying fair apart
On shelvès couchèd at his beddès head,
His press ycovered with a falding[7] red.
And all above there lay a gay sautríe[8]
On which he made a nightès melody
So sweetèly that all the chamber rang :
And *Angelus ad virginem* he sang.
And after that he sang the kingès note ;
Full often blessèd was his merry throat.
And thus this sweetè clerk his timè spent
After his friendès finding, and his rent.[9]

[1] Secret.
[2] Knew.
[3] *Handsomely dressed* and ornamented with *sweet* herbs.
[4] Valerian.
[5] The name given by the Arabs to the celebrated work of the Alexandrian astronomer, Ptolemy.
[6] The pebbles or counters anciently used in numeration.
[7] A coarse cloth, of which the Shipman's gown was made.
[8] Or psaltery, a musical stringed instrument.
[9] His friends' gifts and his own income.

This carpenter had wedded new a wife,
Which that he lovèd morè than his life.
Of eighteen year she was, I guess of age.
Jealous he was, and held her narrow in cage,
For she was wild and young, and he was old.

He knew not Cato (for his wit was rude), who bade that a man should wed one like to himself. Men should wed in accordance with their state ; for youth and age are often at issue.

Fair was this young wife, and her body as pretty and small as any weasel's. She wore a girdle, all barred with silken stripes, and an apron as white as new milk upon her loins, with many a gore in it. Her smock was white, and embroidered in front, and also on her collar behind, with coal-black silk inside and out. The tapes of her white cap were of the same suit to her collar. Her fillet of silk was broad, and set high on her head. And certainly she had a roguish eye.

Full small ypullèd were her browès two,
And they were bent, and black as any sloe.

It was a greater delight to look on her than on the new pear tree ; she was softer than the wool of a wether.

By her girdle hung a leathern purse, tasselled with silk and inlaid with brass. In all this world—to seek up and down—there is no man could find anywhere else so gay a poppet, or so sweet a wench. Brighter was the shining of her hue than of the newly forged noble[1] in the tower. As to her song, it was as loud and brisk as any swallow's sitting on a barn.

Thereto she couldè skip, and make a game
As any kid or calf foll'wing his dame.

Her mouth was as sweet as braket[2] or mead, or hoard of apples laid in hay or heath.

Wincing she was as is a jolly colt,
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.

A brooch she bare upon her low collar, as broad as the boss of a shield.

Her shoes were lacèd on her leggès high,

she was a primrose, a darling,[3] for any good yeoman to marry.

[Nicholas falls in love with her, but the carpenter's wife has also another admirer.]

[1] The gold coin.

[2] A peculiarly sweet drink made of the wort of ale, honey, and spice, said to be still known in Wales.

[3] A primerole, a "piggesnie."

It happened that upon a holyday the good wife went to the church: her forehead shining as bright as any morning, so was it washed when she left her labour. Now there was of that church a parish clerk named Absolon. Curled was his hair, and shining like gold, and floating abroad like a large fan. Full straight and even lay his jolly locks. His complexion was red, his eyes as grey as geese, and his shoes had Paul's windows[1] carved on them. In red hose he went full smartly. He was clad little and properly, in a kirtle of light waget,[2] thickly and fairly set with points. And upon this he had a gay surplice, as white as is the blossom on the hawthorn.

A merry child he was, so God me save;
Well could he letten blood, and clip, and shave,
And make a charter of land, and a quittánce.
In twenty manners could he trip and dance,
(After the school of Oxenfordè though),
And with his leggès casten to and fro;
And playen songès on a small ribíble[3];
Thereto he sung sometimes a loud quiníble.
And ás well could he play on a gittérn.

In all the town there was neither tavern nor brewhouse kept by a gay tapster, that he visited not with his sport.

This Absolon, that jolly was and gay,
Go'th with a censer on the holy day,
Censing the wivès of the parish fast;
And many a lovely look he on them cast,
And namely[4] on this carpenterès wife:
To look on her him thought a merry life.
She was so proper, sweet,

and pleasing,

I dare well say, if she had been a mouse,
And he a cat, he would her hent[5] anon.
This parish clerk, this jolly Absolon,
Hath in his heartè such a love-longíng,
That of no wife took he no offering;
For courtesy, he said, he wouldè none.

. . . . .

From day to day this jolly Absolon
So wooeth her that him is woe-begone.
He waketh all the night and all the day;
To comb his lockès broad, and make him gay.

He wooeth her by messengers;

And swore he wouldè be her owen page.

[1] Ornaments imitative of the windows of St. Paul's.
[2] Supposed to be cloth manufactured at Watchet in Somersetshire.
[3] A musical instrument. [4] Especially. [5] Seize.

He singeth, quavering, as a nightingale. He sent her pins, mead, spiced ale, and cakes[1] out of the fire.

Sometimes to show his lightness and skill, he played Herod on a high scaffold. But what availed it? She loveth Nicholas.

[The lovers meet, and arrange their plans for the future, so as to include the disposal of the unfortunate dupe, the husband, without exciting his suspicion.]

Nicholas carries secretly into his chamber meat and drink for a day or two, and bade Alison say to her husband, if he asked after Nicholas, that she knew not where he was, that she had not seen him all the day, that she believed some malady was upon him, for that to none of her maiden's cries to him would he answer, no matter what might happen.

Thus passeth forth all thilkè Saturday,
That Nicholas still in his chamber lay,
And ate, and drank, and didè what him lest[2]
Till Sunday, that the sun was gone to rest.
This silly[3] carpenter hath great marváile
Of Nicholas, or what thing might him ail,
And said, "I am adread, by Saint Thomás,
It standeth not aright with Nicholas:
God shieldè[4] that he dïed suddenly.
This world is now full tikel sikerly[5]
I saw to-day a corpse yborne to church,
That now on Monday last I saw him worche.[6]
Go up (quoth he unto his knave) anon;
Clepe[7] at his door, or knockè with a stone:
Look how it is, and tell me boldèly."
This knavè go'th him up full sturdily,
And at the chamber-door while that he stood
He cried and knockèd as that he were wood:[8]
"What, how! what do ye, Master Nicholay?
How may ye sleepen all this longè day?"
But all for nought, he heardè not a word.
A hole he found right low upon a board,
That as the cat was wont in for to creep,
And at that hole he lookèd in full deep
And at the last he had of him a sight.
This Nicholas sat ever gapíng upright,
As he had lookèd[9] on the newè moon.
Adown he go'th and told his master soon,
In what array he saw this ilkè man.
This carpenter, to blessen[10] him began,

[1] Wafers. [2] List, pleased. [3] Simple. [4] Forbid.
[5] Tikel sikerly—uncertain surely. [6] Work. [7] Call. [8] Mad.
[9] Gazed. In brief, the line means Nicholas was moon-struck.
[10] To bless himself.

And said; "Now help us Saintè Frideswide
A man wot little what him shall betide,
This man is fallen with his astronómy
In some woodnéss[1] or in some agóny.
I thought aye well how that it shouldè be.
Men should not know of Goddès privity.
Yea blessed be alway a lewèd[2] man
That nought but only his Believè[3] can.
So fared another clerk with astronómy
He walkèd in the fieldès for to pry
Upon the starrès, what there should befall,
Till he was in a marlèpit yfall:
He saw not that. But yet by Saint Thomás,
Me rueth sore for handy Nicholas:
He shall be rated of his studying,
If that I may, by Jesu, Heaven-king.
Get me a staff, that I may underspore![4]
While that thou, Robin, heavest off the door:
He shall out of his studying, as I guess."
And to the chamber door he 'gan him 'dress.
His knavè was a strong carl for the nones,[5]
And by the hasp he hove it off at ones;
And in the floor the doorè fell anon.
This Nicholas sat still as any stone,
And ever he gaped upward to the air.
This carpenter ween'd he were in despair,
And hent[6] him by the shoulders mightily,
And shook him hard, and crïed piteously;
"What, Nicholas? what how, man? look adown:
Awake, and think on Christès passïon.
I crouche[7] thee from elvès, and from wightès."[8]
Therewith the nightspell said he, anon rightés,
On fourè halvès[9] of the house about,
And on the threshold of the door without,—
"Lord Jesu Christ, and Saintè Benedight,
Blessè this house from every wicked wight,[8]
From the nightmáre, the witch's paternoster;
Where won'st[10] thou now Saint Peter's soster."[11]
And at the lastè, handy Nicholas
'Gan for to sikè[12] sore, and said, "Alas!
Shall all the world be lost eftsoonès[13] now?!"
This carpenter answér'd; "What sayest thou?
What? think on God, as we do, men that swinke."[14]
This Nicholas answérèd; "Fetch me drink;
And after will I speak in privity
Of certain thing that toucheth thee and me:

[1] Madness. [2] Ignorant. [3] His Belief, or Catechism.
[4] Raise, by putting a spar or pole under it. [5] Nonce, occasion.
[6] Caught. [7] Mark thee with the cross. [8] Witches. [9] Two parts,
[10] Dwellest. [11] Sister. [12] Sigh. [13] Presently. [14] Labour.

I will tell it no other man, certain."
This carpenter go'th forth, and comes again.
And brought of mighty ale a large quart;
And when that each of them had drunk his part,
This Nicholas his doore 'gan to shet[1]
And down this carpenter by him he set.
And saide; "John, mine hoste lefe[2] and dear
Thou shalt upon thy truthe swear me here,
That to no wight thou shalt my counsel 'wray[3]:
For it is Christes counsel that I say.
And if thou tell it man, thou are forlore[4]:
For this vengeance thou shalt have therefore,
That if thou 'wraye me, thou shalt be wood."[5]
"Nay, Christ forbid it, for his holy blood!"
Quoth then this silly man; "I am no labbe,[6]
Though I it say, I n'am not lefe to gabbe,[7]
Say what thou wilt, I shall it never tell
To child nor wife, by him that harried[8] hell."
"Now, John, (quoth Nicholas) I will not lie,
I have yfound in mine astrology,
As I have looked in the moone bright,
That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
Shall fall a rain, and that so wild and wood
That half so great was never Noah's flood.
This world (he said) in more than an hour
Shall be ydrench'd,[9] so hideous is the shower:
Thus shall mankinde drench, and lose their life."
This carpenter answer'd; "Alas my wife!
And shall she drench? alas, mine Alisoun!"
For sorrow of this he fell almost adown,
And said: "Is there no remedy in this case?"
"Why yes, for God," quoth handy Nicholas;
"If thou wilt worken after lore and rede;[10]
Thou may'st not worken after thine own head.
For thus saith Solomon, that was full true;
Worke by counsel, and thou shalt not rue.
And if thou worken wilt by good counsaill
I undertake, withouten mast and sail,
That I shall saven her, and thee, and me.
Hast thou not heard how savèd was Noé
When that our Lord had warnèd him beforn,
That all the world with water should be lorne?"[11]
"Yes (quoth this carpenter) full yore ago."
"Hast thou not heard (quoth Nicholas) also,
The sorrow of Noah with his fellowship,
That he had ere he gat his wife to ship?

[1] Shut. [2] Loved. [3] Betray. [4] Utterly lost. [5] Mad.
[6] Blabber. [7] Or, in other words, fond of chattering.
[8] Harassed, subdued. [9] Drown'd. [10] Counsel. [11] Lost.

Him had well lever,[1] I dare undertake,
At thilkè time, than all his weathers black
That she had had a ship herself alone.
And therefore wott'st thou what is best to done?
This axeth haste; and of a hasty thing
Men may not preach or maken tarryíng.
Anon go get us fast into this inn
A kneading trough, or else a kemelin[2]
For each of us; but look that they be large,
In which that we may row as in a barge:
And have therein victuaíllè suffisant
But for a day; fie on the remenant.
The water shall aslake[3] and go away
Abouten prime upon the nextè day.
But Robin may not weet of this, thy knave,
Ne eke thy maidè Gill I may not save:
Askè not why: for though thou askè me,
I will not tellen Goddès privity.
Sufficeth thee, but if thy wittès mad,[4]
To have as great a grace as Noah had.
Thy wife shall I well saven out of doubt.
Go now thy way, and speed thee hereabout.
And when thou hast for her, and thee, and me,
Ygetten us these kneading tubbès three,
Then shalt thou hang them in the roof full high,
That no man of our púrveyance espy.
And when thou thus hast done as I have said,
And hast our victual fair in them ylaid,
And eke an axe to smite the cord a-two
When that the water comes, that we may go
And break a hole on high upon the gable
Unto the garden ward, ovér the stable,
That we may freely passen forth our way,
When that the greatè shower is gone away,
Then shalt thou swim as merry, I undertake,
As doth the whitè duck after her drake:
Then will I clepe,[5] how Alison! how John!
Be merry; for the flood passéth anon.
And thou wilt say, Hail, Master Nicholay,
Good morn, I see thee well, for it is day!
And then shall we be lordès all our life
Of all the world, as Noah and his wife.
But of one thing I warnè thee full right
Be well advisèd on that ilkè night
That we be entered into shippès board
That none of us ne speakè not a word,
Ne clepe,[5] ne cry, but be in his prayére:
For it is Goddès owen hestè dear.

[1] Rather. [2] A tub. [3] Slacken.
[4] Unless thy wit (judgment) go mad or senseless. [5] Call.

This ordinance is said; so God thee speed
To morrow night, when men be all asleep,
Into our kneading tubbès will we creep,
And sitten there, abiding Goddès grace.
Go now thy way, I have no longer space
To make of this no longer sermoning:
Men say thus: 'Send the wise, and say no thing:'
Thou art so wise, it needeth not thee teach.
Go, save our lives, and that I thee beseech."
This silly carpenter go'th forth his way,
Full oft he said Alas! and wala wa!
And to his wife he told his privity,
And she was 'ware,[1] and knew it bet'[2] than he.
What all this quaintè cast[3] was for to say,
But nathèless she fared as she should dey,[4]
And said; "Alas! go forth thy way anon,
Help us to 'scape, or we be dead each one.
I am thy very truë wedded wife;
Go, dearè spouse, and help to save our life."
Lo, what a great thing is affection,
A man may die for imagination,
So deepè may impression be take.
This silly carpenter beginneth quake.
Him thinketh verily that he may see
No'h's flood come wallowing as the sea
To drenchen Alison, his honey dear;
He weepeth, waileth, maketh sorry cheer;
He siketh,[5] with full many a sorry swough,[6]
And go'th and getteth him a kneading trough,
And after that a tub, and kemelin,
And privily he sent them to his inn;
And hung them in the roof in privity.
His owen hand then made he ladders three,
To climben by the rungès[7] and the stalks,
Unto the tubbès hanging in the balks;
And them victualled bothè trough and tub
With bread and cheese, with good ale in a jubbe,[8]
Sufficing right enow as for a day.
But ere that he had made all this array,
He sent his knave, and eke his wench also,
Upon his need to London for to go.
And on the Monday, when it drew to night,
He shut his door, withouten candle light,
And dressèd allè thing as it should be;
And shortly, up they clomben allè three,
They sitten stillè well a furlong way,

[1] Aware. [2] Better. [3] Strange contrivance. [4] Die.
[5] Sigheth. [6] Sound. [7] The steps of the ladder, rungs.
[8] The ancient term for a vessel used for holding ale or wine.

Now, *Pater Noster*, clum,[1] quoth Nicholay,
And clum, quoth John, and clum, quoth Alison ;
This carpenter said his devotïon
And still he sit, and biddeth his prayére,
Awaiting on the rain, if he it hear.

[The carpenter from very weariness falls asleep ; his wife and Nicholas go off together. To them, after a time, comes the wife's other lover, Absolon, to woo her. The lovers in the dark make sport of him, and he in revenge gets a hot coulter, and smites Nicholas with it.] As he were mad from woe, Nicholas began to cry,

" Help ! water ! water ! help for Goddès heart ! "

This carpenter out of his slumber start,
And heard one cry " watér ! " as he were wood,[2]
He thought, 'Alas, now cometh Noah's flood ! '
He sit him up withouten wordès mo',
And with his axe he smote the cord atwo,
And down he goeth.
Up starten Alison and Nicholay,
And crieden " out and harow ! " in the street.

The neighbours, both small and great, run in to gaze upon the deceived carpenter, who yet lay in a swoon, pale and wan, for he had broken his arm with the fall.

But stand he must unto his owen harm ;
For when he spake, he was anon bore down
With handy Nicholas and Alisoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood ;[2]
He was aghastè so of Noah's flood
Through fantasie, that of his vanity
He had ybought him kneading tubbès three,
And had them hangèd in the roof above ;
And that he prayèd them for Goddès love
To sitten in the roof *par compagnie*.
The folk gan laughen at his fantasy.
Into the roof they kyken[3] and they gape,
And turnèd all his harm into a jape.
For what so e'er this carpenter answér'd
It was for nought, no man his reason heard.
With oathès great he was so sworn adown,
That he was holden wood in all the town.
For every clerk anon right held with other ;
They said, the man was wood, my levè[4] brother ;
And every wight gan laughen at his strife.

[1] Clum. This word, it is supposed, is intended to express the murmuring noise made by a congregation in accompanying the prayers of the Church service, which they cannot or do not perfectly repeat.
[2] Mad. [3] Stare. [4] Dear.

THE REVE'S TALE.

IN the Prologue of this we read
When folk had laughèd at this nicè case
Of Absoion and handy Nicholas,
Divérsè folk divérsèly they said,
But for the morè part they laughed and played.
Ne at this tale I saw no man him grieve,
But it were only Osèwold the Reve.
Because he was of carpentères craft,
A little ire is in his heartè laft[1];
He gan to grudge and blamed it a lite.[2]

So may I prosper,

Quoth he, "full well could I thee quit
With blearing of a proud milléres eye,
If that me lust to speak of ribaldry.
But I am old; me list not play for age;
Grass time is done, my fodder is now forage.
This whitè top writeth mine oldè years;
Mine heart is al so mouldy as mine hairs.

. . . . . .

But,

We oldè men, I dread, so faren we
Till we be rotten, can we not be ripe;
We hop alwáy, while that the world will pipe.

When we may no longer do, then will we speak. In the cold ashes still reeks the fire.

Four fiery sparks have we, as I shall explain—boasting, lying, anger and covetousness. These four sparks belong unto age. Our old limbs are now unwieldy, but the will shall not fail, that is truth. It is many a year since my tap of life began to run.

For sikerly,[3] when I was born, anon
Death drew the tap of life, and let it gone:

[1] Left. [2] Little. [3] Certainly.

And now so longè hath the tap yrun
Till that almost all empty is the tun.
The stream of life now droppeth on the chimbe[1];
The silly tonguè may well ring and chime,
Of wretchedness, that passèd is full yore:
With oldè folk, save dotage, is no more.[2]

Now, sirs, quoth Osewald the Reve, I pray you that I may not annoy you, although I answer, and somewhat set the Miller's cap.

For lawful is with force, force off to shove.
This drunken miller hath ytold us here,
How that beguilèd was a carpenter
Perádventure in scorn, for I am one:
And by your leave, I shall him quit anon.
Right in his churlès termès will I speak,
I pray to God his neckè might to-break!
He can well in mine eyè see a stalk,
But in his own he cannot see a balk.[4]

THE REVE'S TALE.

At Trompington, not far from Cambridge, there goeth a brook, and over that a bridge, on which brook there stands a mill. This is true that I tell you. A Miller dwelt there this many a day; he was proud and fine as a peacock: he could pipe, and fish, and cast nets, turn cups (with a lathe), wrestle well, and shoot. Ever by his belt he carried a long pavade,[3] and full trenchant was the edge of his sword. He bore a jolly dagger in his pouch. For the peril no man durst touch him. A Sheffield knife was in his hose. His face was round and his nose flat.

As pilled[5] as an apè was his skull.

He was a market swaggerer, when it was crowded. There durst no wight lay hand upon him, that the miller did not swear anon he should suffer for it.

A thief he was forsooth, of corn and meal,
And that a sly, and usèd for to steal.

By name he was called Disdainful Simkin.

A wife he haddè, come of noble kin:
The parson of the town her father was.[6]

[1] The middle or prominent part of the barrel.
[2] Or, in other words, with old folk there is nothing but dotage.
[3] Some unknown weapon of offence, says Tyrrwhitt. Mr. Horne renders it a Norman dirk. [4] Beam. [5] Bald.
[6] As priests could not then marry, the girl was illegitimate.

With her he gave full many a pan of brass,
For that Simkín should in his blood ally.
She was yfostered in a nunnery[1]:
For Simkin wouldè no wife, as he said,
But[2] she were well ynourish'd, and a maid,
To saven his estate and yeomanry.
And she was proud, and pert as is a pie.[3]
A full fair sight was it upon them two:
On holy days before her would he go
With his tippét ybound about his head;
And she came after in a gite[4] of red,
And Simkin haddè hosen of the same.
There durstè no wight clepe her but *madáme*.
Was none so hardy, walking by the way,
That with her durstè rage, or ellès play,
But if he would be slain of Simèkin
With pavade,[5] or with knife, or bodèkin;[6]

(for jealous folk be ever perilous, always they would have their wives believe that); and also, because she was somewhat fond of lewd jests. She was as proud as water in a ditch, and full of haughtiness and abuse. She thought that ladies should spare her on account of her kindred, and her education that she had learned in the nunnery.

A daughter hadden they betwixt them two,
Of twenty year, withouten any mo',
Saving a child that was of half-year age,
In cradle lay, and was a proper page.
This wenchè thick, and well ygrowen was,
With camoys[7] nose, and eyen grey as glass;

but I will not lie, her hair was very beautiful.

The parson of the town, for she was fair,
In purpose was to maken her his heir,
Both of his cattél[8] and of his messuáge,
And strangè made it of her marriage.[9]
His purpose was for to bestow her high
Into some worthy blood of ancestry.
For holy church's goods must be dispended[10]
On holy church's blood that is descended.
Therefore he would his jolly blood honóur,
Though that he shouldè holy church devóur.

[1] The regular girls' school of the time—see the Prioress, p. 72—as it still is in Roman Catholic countries.
[2] Unless. [3] Magpie. [4] Gown. [5] A short sword.
[6] Dagger; as in Hamlet, the "bare bodkin." [7] Flat. [8] Chattels.
[9] That is to say, kept the subject distant as one in which he wished nothing to be yet done. [10] Expended.

Great soken[1] had this miller out of doubt
With wheat and malt, of all the land about;
And namèly[2] there was a great collége
Men clepe[3] the Soler Hall at Cantèbrege,[4]
There was their wheat and eke their malt yground.

And on a day it happened, suddenly, that the manciple lay sick in an illness—men believed certainly that he should die.

For which this miller stole both meal and corn
A thousand partè morè than beforn.
For therebefore he stole but courteously,
But now he is a thief outrageously;

for which the warden chid and made a great stir. But the miller minded not a tare: he cracked aloud and swore it was not so.

Then were there two young poor scholars that dwelt in the hall of which I speak. Headstrong they were, and lusty in their sport. For mere mirth and revelry they cry busily unto the warden to give them leave but for a little while to go to the mill and see their corn ground, and they durst boldly lay their necks at stake that the miller should not steal half a peck from them by sleight, nor by force rob them.

And at the last the warden gave them leave:
John hight[5] that one, and Aleyn[6] hight that other,
Of one town were they born, that hightè Strother,
Far in the North, I cannot tellen where.
This Aleyn maketh ready all his gear,
And on a horse the sack he cast anon;
Forth go'th Aleyn the clerk, and also John,
With good sword and with buckler by their side.
John knew the way, that them needéd no guide,
And at the mill the sack adown he lay'th.
Aleyn spake first; "All hail, Simónd, in faith,
How fares thy fairè daughter and thy wife?"
"Aleyn, welcóme (quoth Simkin), by my life,
And John alsó: how now, what do ye here?
By God, Simónd (quoth John), need has no peer.
Him fallès[7] serve himself that has no swain,
Or else he is a fool, as clerkès say'n.
Our manciple as I hopè[8] will be dead,

so [slowly] work the grinders in his mouth, and therefore am I come, and Aleyn also, to grind our corn and carry it home again; I pray you, therefore, speed us hence as soon as you may.

[1] Toll. [2] Especially. [3] Call. [4] Cambridge.
[5] Was named. [6] Or Allen. [7] Behoves. [8] Expect.

"It shall be done (quoth Simkin) by my faith,
What will ye do while that it is in hand?"
"By God, right by the hopper will I stand,
(Quoth John) and see how that the corn goes in:
Yet saw I never, by my father kin,
How that the hopper waggès to and fro."
Aleyn answérèd: "John, and wilt thou so?
Then will I be beneathè, by my crown,
And see how that the mealè fallès down
Into the trough; that shall be my disport;
For John, in faith, I may be of your sort:
I is as ill a miller as are ye."
This miller smileth for their nicety,[1]
And thought, all this is done but for a wile.
They weenen that no man may them beguile;
But by my thrift, yet shall I blear their eye,
For all their sleight and their philosophy.
The morè quaintè knackès[2] that they make,
The morè will I stealè when I take.
Instead of meal, yet will I give them bren,[3]
The greatest clerks be not the wisest men.
As whilom to the wolf thus spake the mare,
Of all their art ne count I not a tare.
Out at the door he go'th full privily,
When that he saw his timè, subtely
He looketh up and down, till he hath found
The clerkès horse, there as it stood ybound
Behind the mill, under a levesell:[4]
And to the horse he go'th him fair and well,
And strippeth off the bridle right anon.
And when the horse was loose, he 'gan to gone[5]
To-ward the fen, there wildè marès renne,[6]
Forth with "we hee" through thick and eke through thenne.[7]
This miller go'th again, and no word said,
But doth his note, and with the clerkès played,
Till that their corn was fair and well yground.
And when the meal was sackèd and ybound,
This John go'th out, and finds his horse away,
And 'gan to cry, "Harôw and wala wa!
Our horse is lost: Aleyn, for Goddès bonès,
Step on thy feet; come off, man, all at onès.[8]
Alas! our warden hath his palfrey lorn."[9]
This Aleyn all forgetteth meal and corn;
All wa's out of his mind his husbandry:
"What! whilk way is he gone?" he 'gan to cry.
The wife came leaping inward with a renne;[6]
She said, "Alas! your horse go'th to the fen

[1] Dodge, trick. [2] Artifices. [3] Bran. [4] A kind of leafy arbour.
[5] Began to go. [6] Run. [7] Thin. [8] Once. [9] Lost.

With wildè mares, as fast as he may go.
Unthank come on his hand that bound him so,
And he that better should have knit the rein."
"Alas! (quoth John) Aleyn, for Christès pain
Lay down thy sword, and I shall mine also.

I am as active, God knows, as is a deer. By God's heart he shall not escape us both. Why didst thou not put the horse in the barn? Ill hail! Aleyn, by God thou is[1] a fool."

These silly clerkès have full fast yrun
Toward the fen, both Aleyn and eke John;
And when the miller saw that they were gone,
He half a bushel of their flour hath take,
And bade his wife go knead it in a cake.
He said; "I trow, the clerkès be afeard;
Yet can a miller make a clerkès beard,[2]
For all his art. Yea, let them go their way;
Lo, where they go. Yea, let the children play;
They get him not so lightly, by my crown."
These silly clerkès runnen up and down
With "Keep! keep! stand! stand! jossa! warderere![3]
Go whistle thou, and I shall keep him here."
But shortly, till that it was very night
They couldè not, though they did all their might,
Their capel[4] catch, he ran away so fast;
Till in a ditch they caught him at the last.
Weary and wet, as beastès in the rain,
Comes silly John, and with him comes Aleyn,
"Alas!" quoth John, "the day that I was born!

Now we are driven to scorn and contempt. Our corn is stolen; men will call us fools, both the warden, and all our fellows, and especially the miller. Wo is me!"

Thus complaineth John as he goes by the way towards the mill, and the horse in his hand. He found the miller sitting by the fire, for it was night, and they could go no further; so for the love of God they besought lodging of him, and accommodation for their penny.

The miller said again, "If there be any,
Such as it is, yet shall ye have your part;
Mine house is strait, but ye have learnèd art;
Ye can by argumentès make a place
A milè broad, of twenty foot of space.
Let see now if this placè may suffise,
Or make it room with speech, as is your guise."

[1] *Is* is right for *art* and *are* in the Northern dialect of the clerks.
[2] Trick him, cheat him. [3] Cry of warning. [4] Horse.

"Now, Simond (said this John), by Saint Cuthbért,
Aye is[1] thou merry, and that is fair answér'd.
I have heard say, men shall take of two things
Slike[2] as he finds, or take slike[2] as he brings.
But 'specially I pray thee, hostè dear,
Get us some meat and drink, and make us cheer,
And we will payen truly at the full;
With empty hand men may no hawkès tull,[3]
Lo, here our silver ready for to spend."
This miller into town his daughter send
For ale and bread, and roasted them a goose,
And bound their horse, he should no more go loose,
And in his own chambér them made a bed,
With sheetès and with chalons[4] fair yspread,
Not from his owen bed ten foot or twelve.
His daughter had a bed all by herselve
Right in the samè chamber by and by;
It mightè be no bet', and 'causè why,
There was no roomier herberw[5] in the place.
They suppen, and they speak them to soláce,
And drinken ever strong ale at the best.
Abouten midnight wentè they to rest.
Well hath the miller varnishèd his head,
Full pale he was, for-drunken,[6] and nought red:
He yoxeth,[7] and he speaketh through the nose,
As he were on the quake, or on the pose.[8]
To bed he go'th, and with him go'th his wife,
As any jay she light was and jolif,
So was her jolly whistle well ywet.
The cradle at her beddès feet is set,
To rocken, and to give the child to suck.
And when that drunken was all in the crock,[9]
To beddè went the daughter right anon,
To beddè go'th Aleyn, and also John.
There n'as no more; needeth them no dwale,[10]
This miller hath so wisely[11] bibbèd ale,
That as a horse he snorteth in his sleep.

. . . .

His wife bare him a burden a full strong;
Men might her routing[12] hearen a furlóng.
The wenchè routeth eke *par compagnie*.

[The youths now amuse themselves in taking their revenge;

[1] Art. [2] Such, in the Northern dialect. [3] Lure.
[4] Blankets or coverlets from Chalons in France. [5] Lodging.
[6] Quite drunk. [7] Hiccupeth.
[8] Mr. Horne translates this line as follows:—
As with the worst of colds, or quinsy's throes,
and there is no doubt that he has given its spirit.
[9] Earthen jug. [10] Sleeping potion. [11] Certainly. [12] Snoring.

but in the end one of them unwittingly makes a confidant of the aroused Miller himself, and makes some remarks upon his daughter not very agreeable to him. So the Miller bursts out,]

"Ah falsè traitor, falsè clerk," (quoth he,)
"Thou shalt be dead, by Goddès dignity,
Who durstè be so bold to disparáge
My daughter, that is come of high lineáge,
And by the throatè-bole he caught Aleyn;
And he him hent[1] dispiteously again,
And on the nose he smote him with his fest;[2]
Down ran the bloody stream upon his breast;
And on the floor, with nose and mouth to-broke,
They wallowden as piggès in a poke.
And up they go, and down they go anon,
Till that the miller stumbled at a stone,
And down he fellè backward on his wife,
That wistè nothing of this nicè strife;
For she was fallen asleep.

. . . .

And with the fall, right out of sleep she braid.[3]
"Help, holy cross of Bromèholm," (she said,)
In manus tuas, Lord, to thee I call!
Awake, Simónd, the fiend is in thine hall;
Mine heart is broken; help; I am but dead!

. . . .

Help, Simkin, for these falsè clerkès fight.
This John start up as fast as ever he might,
And grasped by the wallès to and fro
To find a staff; and she start up alsó,
And knew the estres[4] better than did John,
And by the wall she took a staff anon,
And saw a little glimmering of light,
For at a hole in shone the moonè bright,
And by that light she saw them bothè two.
But sikerly[5] she wist not who was who,
But as[6] she saw a white thing in her eye;
And when she 'gan this whitè thing espy,
She ween'd[7] the clerk had wear'd a volupere;[8]
And with the staff she drew her near and near,[9]
And ween'd have hit this Aleyn at the full,
And smote this miller on the pillèd skull,
That down he go'th, and cryeth, "Harów, I die!"
These clerkès beat him well, and let him lie,
And greithen[10] them, and take their horse anon,
And eke their meal, and home anon they gone:

[1] Seized. [2] Fist. [3] Started. [4] Interior.
[5] Certainly. [6] Except that. [7] Fancied. [8] Night.
[9] Nearer and nearer. [10] Get themselves ready.

And at the millè door they took their cake
Of half a bushel flour, full well ybake.
Thus is the proudè miller well ybeat,
And hath ylost the grinding of the wheat,
And payèd for the supper every del
Of Aleyn and of John that beat him well.

The Reve's Tale is founded on either two amusing French fabliaux reprinted, with English sidenotes, in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues,' pp. 87-100, or the source from which these fabliaux sprang.

THE MERCHANT'S TALE.

WHILOM there was dwellíng in Lombardy
A worthy knight, that born was of Pavie,
In which he lived in great prosperity ;
And forty years a wifeless man was he.

* * *

And when that he was passèd sixty,

Were it for holiness or for dotáge
I cannot say, but such a great courage
Haddè this knight to be a wedded man,
That day and night he doth all that he can
To 'spien, where that he might wedded be ;
Praying our Lord to granten him, that he
Might onès knowen of that blissful life,
That is betwixt a husband and his wife ;
And for to live undér that holy bond
With which God firstè man to woman bound.
None other life (said he) is worth a bean,
For wedlock is so holy, and so clean,
That in this world it is a paradise :
Thus saith this oldè knight, that was so wise.

And certainly, as sooth as God is King, it is a glorious matter to take a wife ; and especially when a man is old and hoar, then is a wife the fruit of all his treasure. Then should he take a young wife and a fair, to bear him a son and successor, and lead his life in joy and solace ; whereas these bachelors cry out, Alas !

When that they find any adversity
In love, which is but childish vanity.
And truëly it suit well to be so,
That bachelors have often pain and woe :
On brittle ground they build, and brittleness

they find when they believe themselves secure.

They live but as a bird or as a beast,
In liberty, and under no arrest ;

There as a wedded man in his estate
Liveth a life blissfúl and ordinate
Under the yoke of marrïage ybound:
Well may his heart in joy and bliss abound,
For who can be so buxom[1] as a wife?
Who is so true and eke so áttentife
To keep him, sick and whole, as is his make?[2]
For weal or woe she will him not forsake:
She is not weary him to love and serve,
Though that he lie bedrid till that he starve.[3]

And yet some clerkès say, "It is not so." Of these Theophrastus is one. But what matters though

Theoprast list to lie?
"Ne take no wife," quoth he, "for husbandry
As for to spare in household thy dispense;
A truë servant doth more diligence
Thy goods to keepè, than thine owen wife,
For she will claim half part in all her life.
And if that thou be sick, so God me save,
Thy very friendès, or a truë knave[4]
Will keep thee bet' than she, that waiteth aye
After thy goods, and hath done many a day."
This sentence, and a hundred timès worse,
Writeth this man; there God his bonès curse
But take no keep[5] of all such vanity,
Defieth Theophrast, and hearkeneth me!

A wife is verily God's gift. All other kind of gifts, certainly,

As landès, rentès, pasture, or commúne,[6]
Or mebles[7] all be giftès of fortúne
That passen as a shadow on a wall;
But dread[8] not, if I plainly tellen shall,
A wife will last, and in thine house endure
Well longer than thee list perádventure.
Marriage is a full great sacrament;
He which hath no wife, I hold him shent;[9]
He liveth helpless, and all desolate;
(I speak of folk in secular estate);
And harken why, I say not this for nough[4]
That woman is for mannès help ywrought

When high God made Adam, he said then of his goodness, "Let us now make a help unto this man, like unto himself," and then he made Eve. Here ye may see and prove that a wife is man's life and comfort—his terrestrial paradise.

[1] Obedient. [2] Mate. [3] Perish. [4] Servant man. [5] Heed.
[6] Common. [7] Movables. [8] Doubt. [9] Ruined.

So buxom and so virtuous is she
They musten needès live in unity :
One flesh they be, and one blood, as I guess,
Hath but one heart in weal and in distress.
A wife ? ah ! Saintè Mary, *benedicite*,
How might a man have any adversity
That hath a wife ? certes I cannot say—
The joy the which that is betwixt them tway,
There may no tonguè tell or heartè think.
If he be poor, she helpeth him to swink ;[1]
She keepeth his goods, and wasteth never a del[2]
All that her husband list, she liketh well ;
She saith not onès "nay," when he saith "yea" ;
"Do this," saith he ; "all ready, sir," saith she.
O blissful order, O wedlock precious,
Thou art so merry, and eke so virtuous,
And so commended, and approvèd eke,[3]
That every man that holds him worth a leek,
Upon his barè knees ought all his life
Thanken his God, that him had sent a wife ;
Or elles pray to God one him to send
To be with him unto his livès end.
For then his life is set in sikernesse[4]
He may not be deceivèd, as I guess,

so that he work after his wivès counsel.

Then may he boldly bearen up his head,
They be so truè, and alsó so wise.
. . . .
A wife is keeper of thine husbandry :
Well may the sickè man bewail and weep,
There as there is no wife the house to keep.

I warn thee, if thou wilt work wisely,

Love well thy wife as Christ lovéth his church ;
If thou lovést thyself, love thou thy wife.
No man hatéth his flesh, but in his life
He fostereth it, and therefore warn I thee,

cherish thy wife, or thou shalt never thrive. Husband and wife—what though men jest and sport, they hold the sure path. They be so knit, there may no harm happen ; and especially upon the wives side.

For which this January, of whom I told,
Considered hath within his dayès old
The lusty life, the virtuous quiét
That is in marriagè honey-sweet.

[1] Labour. [2] Never a bit. [3] Also. [4] Security.

And for his friendès on a day he sent
To tellen them th' effect of his intent.
With facè sad, he hath them this tale told
He saidè, "Friendès, I am hoar and old
And almost (God wot) on my pittès brink.[1]
Upon my soulè somewhat must I think:
I have my body foolishly dispended,
Blessed be God that it shall be amended;
For I will be certaín a wedded man,
And that anon in all the haste I can.
Unto some maiden, fair and tendêr of age.
I pray you helpeth for my marrïage
All suddenly, for I will not abide:

And I will try to discover

To whom I may be wedded hastily;
But forasmuch as ye be more than I,
Ye shouldè rather such a thing espy
Than I, and where me best were to ally.
But one thing warn I you, my friendès dear,
I will no old wife have in no mannêre:
She shall not passen sixteen year certaín.

I will have no woman twenty years old. And as to these old widows, they know so much craft,

That with them should I never live in rest:
For sundry schoolès maken subtle clerkès.
Women of many a school, the half a clerk is,
But certainly, a young thing men may gie[2]
Right as men may warm wax with handès ply;
Wherefore I say you plainly in a clause,
I will no oldè wife have for that cause.

I would rather hounds should eat me than my inheritance fall into strange hands. I dote not. I know the cause why men should wed, though I also know that many a man speaks of wedlock who knows no more of it than my page. A man should take a wife with great devotion, that he may have children to the honour of God, and that they should help each other in misfortune, and live a chaste life.

And God be thanked my health is good.

Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree
That blossometh ere the fruit ywaxen be;
A blossomy tree is neither dry ne dead:
I feel me no where hoar but on my head.

[1] At past sixty. In Chaucer's days men lived harder lives, and aged faster than they do now. [2] Guide.

Mine heart and all my limbès be as green
As laurel through the year is for to seen.
And sincè ye have heard all mine intent,
I pray you to my will that ye assent."

Different men told him different old examples of marriage Some blamed, some praised it. But at the last shortly to say, there fell a strife between two brethren, one called Placebo and the other Justinus.

Placebo said; "O January, brother,
Full little need have ye, my lord so dear,
Counsel to ask of any that is here,

but that ye be so full of wisdom, that for prudence sake it pleaseth you not to depart from the word of Solomon.

This word said he unto us every one;
'Work allè thing by counsel,' thus said he,
'And thennè shalt thou not repenten thee.'
But though that Solomon spake such a word,
Mine owen dearè brother, and my lord,
So wisely God bring my soul ease and rest,
I hold your owen counsel is the best.
For, brother mine, of me take this motife,
I have now been a court-man all my life,
And God it wot, though I unworthy be,
I havè standen in full great degree
Abouten lordès in full high estate;
Yet had I never with none of them debate,
I never them contrárièd truëly,[1]
I wot well that my lord can more than I;
What that he saith, I hold it firm and stable,

I say the same, or something similar.

A full great fool is any counsellour
That serveth any lord of high honóur
That dare presume, or onès thinken it,
That his counsél should pass his lordès wit.
Nay, lordès be no foolès, by my fay.
Ye have yoursel yspoken here to-day
So high sentènce, so holy, and so well,
That I consent, and cónfirm every del[2]
Your wordès all, and your opinïon:
By God, there is no man in all this town,
Ne in Itaíllè, could bettêr have said,
Christ holdeth him of this full well repaid.
And truëly it is a high coúrage
Of any man that stoopen is in age

[1] No doubt part of Chaucer's experience at Court. [2] Every bit.

To take a young wife: by my father kin,
Your hearte hangeth on a jolly pin.
Do now in this mattére right as you lest.[1]
For finally I hold it for the best."
Justinus, that aye stillè sat and heard,
Right in this wise to Plácebó answer'd,
"Now, brother mine, be patient I you pray,
Since ye have said, and hearkeneth what I say.
Senec', amongès other wordès wise,
Saith, that a man ought hím right well advise
To whom he gives his land or his cattél.[2]
And since I ought advisen me right well
To whom I give my goods away from me,
Well more I ought advised for to be
To whom I give my body: for alwáy
I warn you well it is no childès play
To take a wife without advisèment.

Men must inquire (that is my opinion) whether she be wise and sober, or a drunkard, and proud, and in other ways a shrew, a scold, or a waster of thy goods, or rich or poor; or else a man must be mad.

All be it so, that no man finden shall
None in this world, that trotteth whole in all,
No man, ne beast, such as men can devise.

But nevertheless it ought to suffice for any wife that she has more good qualities than bad.

And all this asketh leisure to inquire.
For God it wot, I have wept many a tear
Full privily since I have had a wife.
Praise whoso will a wedded mannès life,
Certain I find in it but cost and care,
And observánces of all blisses bare;

and yet, God knows, my neighbours about, and especially a great host of women,

Say that I have the mostè steadfast wife,
And eke the meekest one that beareth life.

But I know best where my shoe pincheth me. Ye may, for me, do as best pleaseth you. Consider—ye be a man of age—how ye enter into wedlock, and especially with a young and fair wife. I pray you that ye be not repaid with evil."

"Well," quoth January, "and hast thou said? A straw for Seneca, and a straw for thy sayings. I reckon not your school

[1] Please. [2] Chattels.

terms worth a panier full of herbs. Wiser men than thou have, as ye have heard, assented before to my purpose. Placebo, what say ye?"

"I say it is a cursed man," quoth he, "that hindereth matrimony." And with that word they all rose suddenly, and are agreed that he should wed when and where he pleases.

The fantasie and curious busïness
From day to day 'gan in the soul impress
Of January about his marrïage.
Many a fair shape, and many a fair viságe
There passeth through his heartè night by night,
As whoso took a mirror polished bright,
And set it in a common market-place,
Then should he see many a figure pace
By his mirrór, and in the samè wise
'Gan January in his thought devise
Of maidens, which that dwellèd him beside,
He wistè not where that he might abide,
For though that one have beauty in her face,
Another stands so in the people's grace
For her sadnéss[1] and her benignity,
That of the people greatest voice hath she.
And some were rich, and hadden a bad name.
But nathelèss, betwixt earnést and game,
He at the last appointed him anon,
And let all other from his heartè gone;
And chose her of his own authority,
For love is blind all day, and may not see.
And when he was into the beddè brought,[2]
He pórtrayed in his heart and in his thought,
Her freshè beauty, and her agè tender,
Her middle small, her armès long and slender,
Her wisè governance, her gentleness,
Her womanly and earnest bearing.

And when that he on her was condescended,
Him thought his choicè might not be amended;
For when that he himself concluded had,
Him thought each other mannès wit so bad,

that it were impossible to say a word against his choice; this was his fantasy. He sent to his friends, praying them to do him that pleasure, that they would come hastily to him. He would abridge all their labours. They needed no more to go nor to ride, he had made up his mind where to rest. Placebo came first with his friends. January asked them all a boon,

[1] Seriousness. [2] And when in fancy.

that they would none of them make arguments against his purpose.

Which purpose was pleasánt to God (said he),
And very ground of his prosperity.
He said, there was a maiden in the town,
Which that of beauty haddè great renown.
All were it so, she were of small degree,
Sufficeth him her youth and her beauty;
Which maid (he said) he would have to his wife,
To lead in ease and holiness his life:
And thankèd God, that he might have her all,
That no wight with his blissè parten shall;
And prayèd them to labour in this need,
And shapen that he failè not to speed.
For then, he said, his spirit was at ease.
There is (quoth he) no thing may me displease,
Save one thing pricketh in my conscience,
The which I will rehearse in your presénce.
"I have heard said (quoth he) full yore ago,
There may no man have perfect blisses two,
This is to say, in earth, and eke in heaven.
For though he keep him from the sinnès seven,
And eke from ilkè branch of thilkè tree,
Yet is there so perféct felicity
And so great ease and lust[1] in marrïage,
That ever I am aghast now in mine age
That I shall leadè now so merry a life,
So delicate, withouten woe or strife,
That I shall have mine heaven in earthè here;
For since that very heaven is bought so dear
With tribulation and great penánce,
How should I then, living in such pleasánce,
As allè wedded men do with their wives,

come to the bliss eternal where Christ is? This is my dread, and ye, my two brethren, I beg ye to answer this question."

Justinus, who hated his folly, answered at once in his bantering, and in order to abridge a long tale, would allege no authority.

But saidè, "Sir, so there be none obstácle
Other than this, God of his high mirácle,
And of his mercy may so for you werche[2]
That ere ye have your rites of holy church
Ye may repent of wedded mannès life,
In which ye say there is no woe ne strife:
And ellès God forbid, but if he sent
A wedded man the grace him to repent
Well often, rather than a single man.
And therefore, Sir, the bestè rede I can,[3]

[1] Pleasure. [2] Work. [3] Advice, I know, is.

Despair you not, but have in your memóry,
Peraúnter[1] she may be your purgatóry;
She may be Goddès mean and Goddès whip,
Then shall your soulè up to heaven skip
Swifter than doth an arrow out of bow.
I hope to God hereafter ye shall know
That there n' is none so great felicity
In marrïage, ne never more shall be,

to hinder you from your salvation. My tale is done, for my wit is but thin.

Be not aghast hereof, my brother dear,
But let us waden out of this mattère."

And now Justinus and his brother take their leave. And when men saw that the marriage must needs be, they wrought so by sleight and by wise treaty, that this maiden, who was called May,

As hastily as ever that she might,
Shall wedded be unto this Januáry.
I trow it were too longè you to tarry
If I you told of every script and bond
By which that she was feoffèd in his lond;
Or for to hearken of her rich array.

But finally the day is come, that they both went to the church, to receive the holy Sacrament.

Forth cometh the priest, with stole about his neck,
And bade her be like Sarah and Rebek'[2]
In wisdom, and in truth of marrïage,
And said his orisons, as is uságe,
And crossèd them, and bade God should them bless,
And made all sure enow with holiness.
Thus be they wedded with solemnity;
And at the feastè sitteth he and she
With other worthy folk upon the dais.
All full of joy and bliss is that paláce,
And full of instruments, and of vitaílle
The mostè dainteous of all Itaille.
Before them stood such instruments of soun
That Orpheus, ne Thebès Amphion,
Ne maden never such a melody.
At every course there came loud minstrelsy,
That never trumpèd Joab for to hear—
Ne he Theodomas—yet half so clear
At Thebès, when the city was in doubt.
Bacchus the wine them skinketh[3] all about,

[1] By chance, perhaps. [2] Rebecca. [3] Poureth.

And Venus laugheth upon every wight,
(For January was become her knight
And wouldè both assayen his courage
In liberty, and eke in marriage)
And with her firebrand in her hand about
Danceth before the bride and all the rout.
And certainly I dare right well say this,
Hyméneus, that god of wedding is,
Saw never his[1] life so merry a wedded man.

Hold thou thy peace, thou Marcian poet, that writest us of the wedding of Philologie and Mercury, and of the songs that the Muses sung: too small is thy pen and thy tongue to describe this marriage.

When tender youth hath wedded stooping age,
There is such mirth that it may not be write[2]
Assayeth it yourself, then may ye wite.[3]
If that I lie or no in this mattére.
Maius[4] that sit with so benign a cheer,
Her to behold, it seemèd Faëry;
Queen Hester lookèd never with such eye
On Assuere[5], so meek a look hath she;
I may you not devise all her beauty;
But thus much of her beauty tell I may,
That she was like the bright morrów of May,
Fulfillèd of all beauty, and pleasance.
This January is ravished in a trance
At every time he looketh in her face.

. . . . . .

The hour came that it was but reasonable they should rise from the feast.

. . . . .

And after that men dance, and drinkè fast,
And spices all about the house they cast,
And full of joy and bliss is every man,
All but a squire that hightè[6] Damian,
Which carved before the knight full many a day:
He was so ravished on his lady May,

that for the very pain he was nearly mad; he almost swooned as he stood there:

So sore hath Venus hurt him with her brand,
As that she bare it dancing in her hand.
And to his bed he went him hastily;
No more of him as at this time tell I;
But there I let him now his woe complain,
Till freshè May will ruen on his pain.

[1] In his. [2] Written. [3] Know. [4] May.
[5] Ahasuerus. [6] Was named

O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw breedeth!
O foe familiar, that his service bedeth![1]
O servant traitor, false, of homely hue,
Like to the adder in bosóm untrue,
God shield us allè from your ácquaintance!
O Januáry, drunken in pleasánce,
Of marriage, see how thy Damian,
Thine ownè squire, and thy bornè man,
Intendeth for to do thee villainy;
God grantè thee thine homely foe to spy.
For in this world n' is worsè pestilence
Than homely foe, all day in thy presénce.
Performed hath the Sun his arc diurn,[2]
No longer may the body of him sojoúrn
On th' horizon, as in that latitude:
Night with his mantle, that is dark and rude,
'Gan overspread the hemisphere about:
For which departed is the lusty rout
From January, with thank on every side.
Home to their houses lustily they ride,
There as they do their thingès as them lest,
And, when they saw their timè, go to rest.

. . . . .

Now will I speak of the woeful Damian, that languisheth for love.

I say, O silly Damian, alas!
Answer to my demand, as in this case,
How shalt thou to thy lady freshè May
Tellen thy woe? She will alwáy say nay;
Eke if thou speak, she will thy woe betray;
God be thy help, I can no better say.

. . . . .

This Damian might no longer endure in this wise. But privately he borrowed a pencase, and wrote all his grief in a letter,

In manner of a cómplaint or a lay,
Unto his fairè freshè lady May.
And in a purse of silk, hung on his shirt,
He hath it put, and laid it at his heart.
The moonè that at noon was thilkè day
That January hath wedded freshè May
In ten of Taurus, was into Cancer gliden;
So long hath Maius[3] in her chamber biden,
As custom is unto these nobles all:
A bridè shall not eaten in the hall
Till dayès four, or three days at the least,
Ypassèd be, then let her go to feast.
The fourthè day complete from noon to noon
When that the highè massè was ydone,

[1] Offereth. [2] Diurnal. [3] May.

In hallè sit this January and May,
As fresh as in the brightè summer's day.
And so befellè, that this goodè man
Remembered him upon this Damian,
And saidè; "Saint Mary! how may this be,
That Damian attendeth not to me?
Is he aye sick? or how may this betide?"

His squires, who stood there, excused him, because of his sickness, which hindered him from attending to his business: no other cause might make him tarry. "That is what I thought," quoth his lord,

"He is a gentle squiér by my truth;
If that he diëd, it were harm and ruth;
He is as wise, discreet, and eke secrée,[1]
As any man I wot of his degree;
And thereto mannerly and serviceáble,
And for to be a thrifty man right able.
But after meat as soon as ever I may,
I will myself him visit, and eke[2] May,
To do him all the comfort that I can."
And for that word him blessèd every man,
That of his bounty, and his gentleness
He wouldè so comfórt in his sickness
His squire, for it was a gentle deed.

"Dame," quoth this January, "take good heed, that after meat ye go with all your women, when ye leave this hall, to see this Damian. Gladden him; he is a gentleman; and tell him that I will visit him when I have rested me a little. And speed you fast, for I will wait till that ye are fast asleep by my side."

This freshè May hath straight her way yhold
With all her women unto Damian.
Down by his beddès sidè sit she then,
Comforting him as goodly as she may.
This Damian, when that his time he say,[3]
In secret wise, his purse, and eke his bill,[4]
In which that he ywritten had his will,
Hath put into her hand withouten more
Save that he sighèd wondrous deep and sore,
And softèly to her, right thus said he:

"Mercy, do not discover me; for I am but dead if that this thing be known."

This purse hath she within her bosom hid,
And went her way; ye get no more of me;
But unto January ycome is she.

[1] Secret. [2] Also. [3] Saw. [4] Note, billet-doux.

[May receives but too favourably the letter, and answers it.]

Up riseth Damian the nextè morrow;
All passed was his sickness and his sorrow.
He combeth him, he pruneth him and picketh,[1]
He doth all that unto his lady liketh;[2]
And eke to January he go'th as low
As ever did a doggè for the bow.[3]
He is so pleasant unto every man
(For craft is all, whoso that do it can),
That every wight is fain to speak him good;
And fully in his lady's grace he stood.

Thus leave I Damian and proceed with my tale.

Some clerkès holden that felicity
Stands in delight, and therefore certain he,
This noble January, with all his might,
In honest wise as 'longeth to a knight,
Shaped him to liven full deliciously.
His housing, his array, as honestly
To his degree was makèd as a king's.
Amongès other of his honest things,
He had a garden wallèd all with stone,
So fair a garden wot[4] I no where none.
For out of doubt I verily suppose
That he that wrote the Rómaunt of the Rose
Ne could of it the beauty well devise:
Ne Priapus ne might not well suffise
Though he be god of gardens, for to tell
The beauty of the garden, and the well
That stood undér a laurel always green.
Full often time he Pluto, and his queen
Proserpina, and all her faërie,
Disporten them, and maken melody
About that well, and dancèd, as men told.

This noble knight, the aged January, hath such pleasure in walking in his garden, that he will suffer no one to bear the key but himself; he ever carried the silver key of the small wicket, with which when he pleased he opened it. . . . .

[1] The image referred to is that of a bird busily engaged taking away, *i.e. pruning* and *picking* out the damaged or redundant feathers. Thus Gower writes,—

"For there he pruneth him and picketh,
As doth an hawke when him well liketh."

[2] That pleases his lady.

[3] Or, as we should now say, for the gun. What a picture of the crouching, watchful *lurcher*-lover, ready, beneath all his apparent humility and harmlessness, to spring upon his prey!

[4] Know.

And in this wisè many a merry day
Livèd this January and freshè May;
But worldly joy may not alwáy endure
To January, ne to no creäture.
O sudden hap, O thou fortúne unstable,
Like to the Scorpion so déceivável,
That flatterest with thy head when thou wilt sting;
Thy tail is death, through thine envenoming;
O brittle joy, O sweetè venom quaint,
O monster, that so subtlely canst paint
Thy giftès, under hue of steadfastness,
That thou deceivest bothè more and less;[1]
Why hast thou January thus deceived,
That haddest him for thy full friend received?

And now thou hast bereft him of both his eyes; for sorrow of which he desireth to die.

Alas! this noble January, free
Amid his lust[2] and his prosperity
Is waxen blind, and that all suddenly.
He weepeth and he waileth piteously;
And therewithal the fire of jealousy
(Lest that his wife should fall in some folly)
So burnt his heartè, that he wouldè fain
That some man hath both him and her yslain;
For neither after his death, ne in his life,
Ne would he that she werè love, ne wife,
But ever live as widow in clothès blake,
Sole as the turtle that hath lost her make.[3]
But at the last, after a month or tway,
His sorrow 'gan assuagen, sooth to say;
For when he wist it may no other be,
He patiently took his adversity:

except that, beyond doubt, he may not forget that he is jealous evermore.

Which jealousy it was so oútrageous,
That neither in hall, ne in none other house,
Ne in none other place nevér the mo'
He n' ouldè suffer her to ride or go,
But if that he had hand on her alwáy:
For which full often weepeth freshè May.

[Unable otherwise to obtain a moment's conversation with each other, Damian succeeds in making a false key to the wicket, and enters the garden one morning just before January and May, and sits still under a bush.]

[1] Rich and poor. [2] Pleasure, joy. [3] Mate.

Anon

This January, as blind as is a stone,
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo',
Into this freshè garden is ago',
And clappèd to the wicket suddenly.
"Now wife," quoth he, "here n' is but ye and I;
That art the creäture that I best love:
For by that Lord that sits in heaven above,
I haddè liever[1] dien on a knife
Than thee offenden, dearè truë wife.
For Goddès sake, thinkè how I thee chose,

not for covetousness,

But only for the love I had to thee;
And though that I be old and may not see,
Be true to me; and I will tell you why;
Three thingès certes shall ye win thereby;
First, love of Christ, and to yourself honour
And all mine heritagè, town and tower.
I give it you, make charters as you lest;[2]
This shall be done to morrow ere sun-rest,
So wisely[3] God my soulè bring to bliss!
I pray you first in covenant ye me kiss.
And though that I be jealous, wite[4] me nought,
Ye be so deep imprinted in my thought,
That when that I consider your beauty,
And therewithal the unlikely elde[5] of me,
I may not certes, though I shouldè die,
Forbear to be out of your company
For very love; this is withouten doubt.
Now kiss me, wife, and let us roam about."
This freshè May, when she his wordès heard,
Benignèly to January answér'd;
But first and forward she began to weep;
"I have, quoth she, a soulè for to keep
As well as ye, and also mine honour;
And of my wifehood thilkè tender flower
Which that I have assurèd in your hond
When that the priest to you my body bound,
Wherefore I will answér in this mannére
With leave of you, mine owen lord so dear.
I pray to God that never dawn that day
That I ne starve[6] as foul as woman may,
If ever I do unto my kin that shame,
Or ellès I impairè so my name,
That I be false; and if I do that lack,[7]
Do strippen me and put me in a sack,

[1] Rather. [2] Please. [3] Truly. [4] Blame. [5] Age.
[6] Perish. [7] A fault, vice, or disgraceful thing.

And in the nextè river do me drench :[1]
I am a gentlewoman and no wench.

Why speak ye thus? But that men be ever untrue, and women ever reproved. Ye have no other delight, I believe, but to speak to us of blame and untrustworthiness."

And with that word she saw where Damian
Sat in the bush, and coughing she began
And with her fingers signès madè she,
That Damian should climb upon a tree.
. . . .

Bright was the day, and blue the firmament ;
Phœbus of gold his streamès down hath sent
To gladden every flower with his warmnéss ;
He was that time in Gemini, I guess,
But little from his declinatīon
Of Cancer, Jovè's exaltatīon.
And so befell in that bright morrow tide,
That in that garden, on the farther side,
Pluto, that is the king of Faërie,
And many a lady in his company,
Following his wife, the queen Prosérpina,
Which that he ravish'd out of Célicia
While that she gathered flowrès in the mead
(In Claudīan ye may the story read,
How in his grisly cartè he her fet')[2]
This king of Faërie adown him set
Upon a bench of turfès fresh and green,
And right anon thus said he to his queen :
"My wife," quoth he, "there may no wight say nay,
Th' experience so proveth every day,
The treason which that woman doth to man.
Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can
Notábl' of your untruth and brittleness.
O Solomon, wise and richest of richésse,
Fulfilled of sapience and wordly glory,
Full worthy be thy wordès to memóry
To every wight, that wit and reason can.
Thus praiseth he the bounty yet of man ;
Among a thousand men yet found I one,
But of all women, found I never none.
Thus saith this king, that know'th your wickedness ;
And Jesus, *Filius*[3] Sirach, as I guess,
He speaks of you but seldom reverence.
A wildè fire, and córrupt pestilence,
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night :
Ne see ye not this honourable knight ?
Because, alas ! that he is blind and old,

[1] That is to say, drown me. [2] Fetched. [3] Son of.

his own man seeks to dishonour him. Now will I grant unto the old, blind, worthy knight his sight, that he may see his wife's baseness"

"Ye shall?" quoth Proserpine, "and will ye so?"
Now by my mother Ceres' soul I swear,
That I shall give her suffisant answére,
And allè women after for her sake;
That though they be in any guilt ytake,
With facè bold they shall themselves excuse,
And bear them down that wouldè them accuse:
For lack of answer, none of them shall dien.
Had a man seën thing with both his eyen,
Yet shall womén viságe it hardily,
And weep, and swear, and chiden subtlely,
So that ye men shall be lewèd[1] as geese.
What recketh me of your authorities?
I wot well that this Jew, this Solomon,
Found of us women foolès many one:
But though that he ne found no good womán,
Yet there hath foundè many another man
Women full true, full good, and virtuous;
Witness on them that dwelt in Christès house;
With martyrdom they provèd their constánce.
The Roman gestès make eke rémembrance
Of many a very truë wife also.
But, Sirè, be not wroth, albeit so
Though that he said he found no good womán,
I pray you take the sentence of the man:
He meantè thus, that in soveréign bounty
N' is none but God, that sit in Trinity
Aye, for the very God that n' is but one;
What maketh ye so much of Solomon?
What though he made a temple, Goddès house?
What though he richè were and glorious?
So made he eke a temple of false gods:

How might he do a thing that is more strongly forbidding than that?

He was a libertine and an idolater. And in his age forsook his very God. And if God had not spared him for his father's sake, he should have lost his kingdom.

I set right naught of all the villainy
That ye of women write, a butterfly.
I am a woman, needès must I speak,
Or elles swellè till mine heartè break.

[1] Stupid, or ignorant.

For since he said that we be janglerésses,
As ever whole I mightè brouke[1] my tresses,
I shall not sparen for no courtesy,
To speak him harm, that would us villainy."
"Dame," quoth this Pluto, "be no longer wroth;
I give it up: but since I swore mine oath
That I will granten him his sight again,
My word shall stand, I warnè you certain:
I am a king, it suit me not to lie."
"And I," quoth she, "am queen of Faërie.
Her answer shall she have, I undertake,
Let us no morè wordès of it make.
Forsooth I will no longer you contráry."

[Accordingly, the moment May has succeeded in getting away to Damian from the knight's side, his blindness is removed, and he sees the two lovers in too close company. But Proserpina is as good as her word. May's woman's wit and address save her: she explains away the meeting, and almost persuades the knight to distrust his own eyes, observing in conclusion]
Yea, Sir, ye may believe as you please;

But, Sir, a man that waketh out of sleep,
He may not suddenly well taken keep[2]
Upon a thing, ne see it perfectly,
Till that he be adawèd[3] verily.
Right so a man that long hath blind ybe,
He may not suddenly so well ysee,
First when his sight is newè come again
As he that hath a day or two yseen.
Till that your sight ystablish'd be a while,
There may full many a sightè you beguile.
Beware, I pray you, for by Heaven's king,
Full many a man weenéth[4] to see a thing,
And it is all another than it seemeth;
He that misconceiveth, he misdeemeth."

The story of the Enchanted Tree, and wifely wiles connected with it, is Eastern; see Mr. Clouston's sketches of the Indo-Persian, Turkish, Arabian, Singhalese, and other versions of it in the Chaucer Society's 'Originals and Analogues,' pp. 343-364, 544, and then, Latin versions, Boccaccio's and Caxton's, *ib.*, pp. 177-188.

[1] *Brouke*, enjoy, *whole*, wholly, or in all their luxuriant beauty, my tresses,
[2] Take proper notice at first. [3] Awaked. [4] Believeth.

THE SHIPMAN'S TALE.

A MERCHANT once dwelt at Saint Denis, who was rich, for which men held him also wise. He had a wife of excellent beauty: she was fond of company and of revel, that cause more expense

Than worth is all the cheer and reverence
That men them do at feastès and at dances.
Such salutatïons and countenánces
Passeth, as doth the shadow on a wall:
But woe is him that payen must for all.
The silly husband algate[1] mustè pay,
He must us clothè, in full good array,
All for his owen worship richèly:
In which array we dancen jollily.

And if he cannot, perchance, or else likes not, to endure such expense,

But thinkęth it is wasted and ylost,
Then must another payen for our cost,
Or lend us gold, and that is perilous.
This noble merchant held a noble house,
For which he haddè all day great repair
For his largéss, and for his wife was fair.
What wonder is? but hearkeneth to my tale.

Among all these guests, great and little, there was a monk, a fair man and a bold, I trow he was some thirty winters of age, who was ever drawing continually towards this house. This young monk, that was so fair of face, had been so well acquainted with this good merchant since that their knowledge of each other first began,

That in his house as familiar was he
As it possíble is a friend to be.
And for as muchel as this goodè man,
And eke this monk, of which that I began,

[1] Always.

Were bothè two yborn in one villáge,
The monk him claimeth as for cousinage;
And he against him said not onès nay,
But was as glad thereof, as fowl[1] of day;
For to his heart it was a great pleasánce.
Thus be they knit with etern' álliánce,
And ilk[2] of them 'gan other to assure,
Of brotherhood, while that their life may 'dure.[3]

Free and liberal, especially in his household expenditure, was this Dan John, and diligent in pleasing and in incurring great costs. He would not forget to give to the least of the pages in all that house; but in accordance with their degree he gave to the lord, and afterwards to his men, when they came, some kind of honest thing; for which they were as glad of his coming as the bird is glad at the uprising of the sun.

But so befell, this merchant on a day,
Shaped him to maken ready his array
Toward the town of Bruges for to fare,
To buyen there a portïon of ware:
For which he hath to Paris sent anon
A messenger, and prayèd hath Dan John
That he should come to Saint Denïs, and play
With him, and with his wife, a day or tway,
Ere he to Bruges went, in allè wise.
This noble monk, of which I you devise,
Hath of his abbot, as him list, licënse,
(Because he was a man of high prudénce,
And eke an officer) out for to ride,
To see their granges, and their barnès wide,
And unto Saint Denis he comes anon.
Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John,
Our dearè cousin, full of courtesy?
With him he brought a jubbe of Malvoisie[4]
And eke another full of wine Vernage,[5]
And Volantyn,[6] as aye was his uságe:
And thus I let them eat, and drink, and play,
This merchant and this monk, a day or tway.
The thirdè day this merchant up he riseth,
And on hïs needès sadly[7] him adviseth:
And up into his counting house go'th he,
To reckon with himself, as well may be,
Of thilkè year, how that it with him stood,
And how that he dispended had his good,

[1] Bird. [2] Each.
[3] They were to be sworn brothers, like Palamon and Arcite in the Knight's Tale. [4] A vessel holding Malmsey wine.
[5] A species of wine so called. [6] Wild fowl, or game. [7] Seriously.

And if that he increasèd were or non.
His bookès and his baggès many a one
He hath before him on his counter board;
Full richè was his treasure and his hoard;
For which full fast his counter door he shet;[1]
And eke he wouldè no man should him let[2]
Of his accountès, for the meanè time:
And thus he sat, till it was passèd prime.
Dan John was risen in the morn alsó,
And in the garden walketh to and fro,
And hath his thingès said full courteously.
This goodè wife came walking privily
Into the garden, there he walketh soft,
And him saluteth, as she hath done oft.

A maiden child was with her, whom she may govern and guide as she pleases, for the maid was yet under the staff of discipline.

"O dear cousin mine, Dan John," said she, "what aileth you to rise so early?"

"Niece," quoth he, "five hours' sleep in a night ought to suffice, except for an old man. But, dear niece, why be ye so pale?"

"Alas!" said she, "to no wight dare I tell how it stands with me. Wherefore I think to go out of this country, or else to make an end of myself,

So full am I of dread and eke of care."
This monk began upon this wife to stare,
And said, "Alas! my niecè, God forbid,
That ye for any sorrow, or any dread,
Fordo[3] yourself, but telleth me your grief,
Perádventure I may in your mischief[4]
Counsel or help: and therefore telleth me
All your annoy.

It shall be secret, for on my Portos[5] here I make an oath that never in my life, willingly or unwillingly, shall I betray your confidence."

"The same again to you," quoth she, "I say."
"By God and by this Portos[5] will I swear,
Though men me woulden all in pieces tear,
Ne shall I never, for to go to hell,
Betray one word of thing that ye me tell,
Nought for no cousinage, ne álliánce,
But verily for love and áffiánce."
Thus be they sworn, and hereupon ykist,
And each of them told other what them list.
"Cousin," quoth she, "if that I had a space,
As I have none, and namely[6] in this place,

[1] Shut. [2] Disturb or hinder him. [3] Undo; make away with.
[4] Misfortune. [5] Breviary. [6] Especially.

Then would I tell a legend of my life,
What I have suffered since I was a wife,
With mine husbánd, though he be your cousín."
"Nay," quoth this monk, "by God and Saint Martín,
He is no morè cousin unto me,
Than is this leaf that hangeth on the tree:
I cleped[1] him so, by Saint Denis of France,
To have the morè cause of ácquaintance

with you; then tell me

your grief, lest that he come adown,
And hasteth you, and go'th your way anon."

"Oh, my Dan John," said she,

"Full lefe[2] me were this counsel for to hide,
But out it must, I may no more abide.
Mine husband is to me the worstè man
That ever was sithen the world began.

What most grieves me is his niggardliness. Ye know well that some things women naturally desire. They would that their husbands should be hardy, wise, rich, liberal and kind.

But by the Lord that for us allè bled,
For his honóur myselven to array,
A Sunday next comíng yet must I pay
A hundred franks, or ellès am I lorne.[3]
Yet were me lever that I were unborn
Than me were done slandér or villainy;
And if mine husband eke might it espy,
I n'ere but lost, and therefore I you pray
Lend me this sum, or ellès must I dey.
Dan John, I say, lend me this hundred franks;
Pardé I will not faillè thee my thanks,
If that you lust[4] to do that I you pray,
For at a certain day I will you pay."

This gentle monk answered,

"Now truëly mine owen lady dear,
I have on you so great pity and ruth
That I you swear, and plightè you my truth,
That when your husband is to Flanders fare,
I shall deliver you out of your care,
For I will bringen you a hundred franks.

"Go now," said he, "and let us dine." The wife bade the cooks that they should hasten,

[1] Called. [2] Glad. [3] Lost. [4] Please.

So that men mightè dine, and that anon.
Up to her husband is this wife ygone,
And knocketh at his doorè boldèly.
"*Qui est là?*"[1] quoth he. "Peter, it am I,"
Quoth she. "How longè, Sirè, will ye fast?
How longè time will ye reckón and cast
Your summès, and your bookès and your things?
The devil have part of all such reckonings!

Ye have enough, parde, of God's gifts; come down to-day and let your bag alone. Are ye not ashamed that Dan John should fast this long cheerless day?

What? let us hearè mass, and go we dine?"
"Wife," quoth this man, "little canst thou divine
The curious businessè that we have:
For of us chapmen, all so God me save,
And by that lord that cleped is Saint Ive,
Scarcely amongès twelvè, two shall thrive
Continually, lasting unto our age.
We may well maken cheer and good viságe.
And drivè forth the world as it may be,
And keepen our estate in privity,
Till we be dead, or ellès that we play
A pilgrimage, or go out of the way.
And therefore have I great necessity,
Upon this quaintè[2] world to ádvise me.
For evermore we mostè stand in dread
Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhead.
To Flanders will I go to-morrow at day,
And come again as soon as ever I may.
For which, my dearè wife, I thee beseeke,[3]
As be to every wight buxóm and meek,
And for to keep our goods be curious,[4]
And honestly governè well our house.
Thou hast enough, in every manner wise,
That to a thrifty husband may suffise.
Thee lacketh none array, ne no vitaílle;
Of silver in thy purse thou may'st not fail.
And with that word his counter door he shet,
And down he go'th; no longer would he let[5];
And hastily a mass was there ysaid,
And speedily the tables were ylaid,
And to the dinner fastè they them sped,
And richèly this chapman the monk fed.
And after dinner Dan John soberly
This chapman took apart, and privily

[1] Who is there? [2] Strange. [3] Beseech.
[4] Careful—watchful. [5] Delay.

He said him thus: "Cousín, it standeth so,
That, well I see, to Bruges will ye go;
God and Saint Austin speedè you and guide,
I pray you, cousin, wisely that ye ride.

Govern you also of your diet temperately, and especially during this heat.

Betwixt us two needéth no strangè fare;
Farewell, cousín, God shieldè you from care!
If anything there be by day or night,
If it lay in my power and my might,
That ye me will command in any wise,
It shall be done, right as ye will devise.
One thing ere that ye go, if it might be,
I wouldè prayen you to lendè me
A hundred frankès for a week or tway,
For certain beastès that I mustè bey,[1]
To storè with a placè that is ours:
(God help me so, I would that it were yours)
I shall not faillé surely of my day,
Not for a thousand franks.

But I pray you let this thing be secret, for I would buy these beasts to-night.

And fare now well, mine owen cousin dear,
Grand mercy of your cost and of your cheer!"
This noble merchant gentlely anon
Answered and said, "O cousin mine, Dan John,
Now sikerly[2] this is a small request:
My gold is yourès whennè that you lest[3]
And not onlý my gold, but my chaffare;[4]
Take what you list, God shieldè[5] that ye spare.

But one thing ye know well enough of chapmen, that money is their plough. We must borrow while we have a name. It is no sport to be without either goods or money. So pay it again when convenient to you. I would gladly please you to the best of my might."

These hundred frankès fetched he forth anon,
And privily he took them to Dan John:
No wight in all this world wist of this loan
Saving the merchant, and Dan John alone.
They drink, and speak, and roam awhile, and play,
Till that Dan John ridéth to his abbéy.
The morrow came, and forth this merchant rideth
To Flanders ward; his 'prentice well him guideth

[1] Buy. [2] Certainly. [3] Please. [4] Merchandize. [5] Forbid.

Till that he came to Bruges merrily.
Now go'th this merchant fast and busily
About his need, and buyeth and creanceth ;[1]
He neither playeth at the dice, ne danceth ;
But as a merchant, shortly for to tell,
He leads his life, and there I let him dwell.

[Taking advantage of this loan, Dan John gives to the merchant's wife the hundred franks, and causes her to forget her duty to her absent husband.]

This merchant, when that ended was the fair,
To Saint Denis he 'gan for to repair,
And with his wife he maketh feast and cheer,
And telleth her that chaffere is so dear

that he must needs make an agreement for a loan.

For he was bound in a recognizance,
To payen twenty thousand shields[2] anon.
For which this merchant is to Paris gone
To borrow of certain friendès that he had
A certain frankès, and some with him he lad.[3]
And when that he was come into the town,

for great tenderness and great love towards Dan John, he goeth first to him himself, not to ask or borrow money of him, but in order to know and see as to his welfare, and to tell him of his dealings, as friends do when they be met in company.

Dan John him maketh feast and merry cheer,
And he him told again full specially,
How he had bought right well and graciously
(Thanked be God) all whole his merchandise ;
Save that he must in allè manner wise
Maken a chevisance,[4] as for his best :
And then he shouldè be in joy and rest.
Dan John answéred, "Certes I am fain,[5]
That ye in health be comen home again :
And if that I were rich, as have I bliss,
Of twenty thousand shields should ye not miss,
For ye so kindèly this other day
Lentè me gold, and as I can and may,
I thankè you, by God and by Saint Jame
But nathèless I took it to our Dame,
Your wife at home, the samè gold again
Upon your bench,

she knows it well.

[1] Borroweth on credit. [2] French crowns. [3] Took.
[4] Agreement for borrowing money. [5] Glad.

Now by your leave, I may no longer dwell ;
Our abbot will out of this town anon,
And in his company I mustè gone.
Greet well our dame, mine owen niecè sweet,
And farewell, dearè cousín, till we meet ! "

This merchant, who was full wary and wise, hath borrowed, and paid also in Paris, to certain Lombards, the gold he borrowed, and got back his bond,

And home he go'th, as merry as a popinjay.
For well he knew he stood in such array,
That needès must he win in that voyáge
A thousand franks above all his costage.[1]
His wife full ready met him at the gate,
As she was wont of old uságe algate :[2]
And all that night in mirthè they be set,
For he was rich, and clearly out of debt.

The merchant then said,

"By God," quoth he, "I am a little wroth
With you, my wife, although it be me loth :[3]
And wot ye why ? by God, as that I guess,
Ye have ymade a manner strangèness
Betwixen me and my cousín Dan John.
Ye should have warnèd me, ere I had gone,
That he you had a hundred frankès paid
By ready token :

I hold him ungratefully treated, in speaking to him of borrowed money.

(Me seemèd so as by his countenance)
But nathèless, by God of heaven king,
I thoughtè not to ask of him no thing.
I pray thee, wife, do thou no morè so.
Tell me alway, ere that I from thee go,
If any debtor hath in my absénce
Ypayèd thee, lest in thy negligence
I might him ask a thing that he hath paid.
This wife was not afearèd ne afraid,
But boldèly she said, and that anon ;
" Mary ! I defy that falsè monk Dan John ;

I know he gave me certain gold. What ? Evil fall on this monk's snout ! God knows, I believed he had given it me because of you, to aid mine honour and my profit.

For cousinage, and eke for *bellè chere*,
That he hath had full often timès here.

[1] Costs. [2] Always. [3] Unpleasant.

But sincè that I stand in this disjoint,
I will answér you shortly to the point :·

by my truth I have spent it on my apparel, every bit, and not on waste.

And for I have bestowèd it so well
For your honóur, for Goddès sake I say
As be not wroth, but let us laugh and play.

Forgive it me, mine own dear husband.

This merchant saw none other remedy :
And for to chiden, it n'as but follý
Sith that the thing may not amended be.
"Now wife," he said, "and I forgive it thee ;
But by thy life ne be no more so large ;
Keep bet'[1] my good ; this give I thee in charge."

[1] Better.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

THAT Chaucer had a high, we might say holy, sense of the purity and inviolability of the marriage bond, and of the duties and self-sacrifices it may demand, has been shown too touchingly and eloquently in various parts of his works, but especially in the 'Franklin's Tale,' for us to undertake the presumptuous task of urging such a conclusion. In that tale, then, and in his various other serious tales, is to be found the poet's best answer to and excuse for the licentious modes of treatment he has allowed himself in his humorous productions, which have imposed upon us the somewhat delicate and difficult task of making the foregoing selections. In the one, he did but at the worst stoop to the tastes of the time in order to attract—and influence—and, then, to raise those tastes to the height necessary for the due comprehension and appreciation of his moral teachings in the other. Compare him in these respects with the comic dramatists of the Congreve school, and we see at once how accidental and extraneous with Chaucer, looking at his labours as a whole, are the impurities and immoralities that make up nearly the "being, end and aim" of the brilliant but vicious writers who occupied our stage in the last century. In Chaucer's hearty laugh there is something so genial, it is for the most part so calculated to yield good feelings, that in giving way to our merriment in his company we can hardly avoid experiencing a sense of relief from the "perilous stuff" that too often "weighs upon the heart." The dramatists in question are neither genial nor kindly; and are much more likely to leave perilous stuff of their own behind them than to take any away. In a word, goodness with them, whenever they appear to exhibit any, is but a passport for evil; evil with Chaucer, if he ever defiles his hand with it, is sure to be presently washed away by the stream of beautiful and noble thoughts and deeds that he pours forth.

With a brief summary of the poet's labours we now conclude

this volume. Let us glance at what he did for his own time, and what for ours and for remotest posterity.

The men of the fourteenth century (a few book-worms only excepted) had lost nearly all remembrance or consciousness of the accumulated treasures of philosophy and learning of the ancients: Chaucer brought those treasures back to them, so amalgamated with precious gifts of his own, and so incorporated into the national tongue, that they could never experience a like fate.

What Shakspere said the stage should be—and made it—Chaucer had previously made his works;—a mirror reflecting the very image and body of the time—and with the same object as Shakspere, that vice and scorn might see their true image. In consequence, what Froissart was merely to chivalry, an unreal but brilliant institution of the hour, Chaucer was to the entire life of England, with all its variety of character and class, all its conflicting interests, and passions, and views. Between the Poore Parson and the Clerk of Oxenford, and the Pardoner and Sumpnour, what a gulf intervenes; yet is it step by step filled up and peopled. We have often wondered that romance writers have paid so little attention to the fourteenth century, seeing that Chaucer has left them such complete and abundant materials. If they want to learn something of the higher philosophy of the period, let them for instance look at the long passage in the 'Knight's Tale' commencing

> The Firstè Mover of the cause above;

or at the Wife of Bath's description of true gentility. Look—who

> intendeth aye,
> To do the gentle deedès that he can,
> And take *him* for the greatest gentleman.

If they want to know to what absurdities philosophy could at the same time descend, let them look at the accounts of the magical processes that make it appear

> the rockès be away,

in the 'Franklin's Tale;' or of the processes of that "sliding science," Alchemy, that has made not only the Yeoman but the Canon master also "bare." If they want to glance at the commercial peculiarities of Europe at the time, they will get many a useful hint from the movements and doings of the merchant in the 'Shipman's Tale.' The fragment called the 'Cook's Tale' will give them an apprentice's London life that shall make even Jan Vincent's seem dull in comparison. The exquisite pictures and

descriptions of rural life in England in the story of the 'Widow and her Two Daughters,' who lost their Cock, will be found to want nothing in minuteness of detailed information that we could expect to derive from the pages of Miss Mitford. Lastly, would they replace with real ones the conventional names, conventional oaths, conventional styles of compliment, that they take such pains to fabricate under the impression they can ultimately produce the ring of the true antique metal, they may do so at pleasure by referring to Chaucer. Here is a list of genuine names for them culled from his works—Absalon, Simkin, John, Aleyn, Hodge, Roger, Jankin, Ralph, etc. Here a list of oaths :—St Thomas, or "now help us, St. Frideswide," —for a carpenter ; "God wot" for a knight ; St. Neot for a smith ; St. Cuthbert for a collegian ; St. Eloy—in common for a tender lady Prioress and a rough and ready carter ; Sweet Saint Anne, for the anything but a Sweet Sumpnour ; whilst for a very pretty exclamation for a feminine mouth suddenly startled, we find—"Holy Cross of Bromèholme !"—the nunnery where the alarmed wife of a Miller has been educated. As to conversation, Chaucer will tell you the whole process from the commencement of an address to a company after dinner, when "lordings" took the place of the "gentlemen" of the present day, to the reply where a compliment has been paid to a lady—'Yea, God amend defaults, sir."

But there were yet more important claims on the admiration and gratitude of the men of the fourteenth century. Chaucer was not only their restorer of learning, their great poet and teacher, their painter and historian in the highest sense of the words, but he was also their great religious Reformer—the literary Titan who could at once pull down and build up with equal power and skill ; who made them despise and abhor wrong, fraud, and vice, even though it were to be found in the highest places, and mixed up with the most potent of institutions, without at the same time lessening their love and reverence for all that was true, noble, and holy that those same places or institutions might contain. And to say that Chaucer was a great religious reformer when the church had so mighty an influence in temporal as well as in spiritual matters, is to say he was also a great social and political reformer. We may be excused for here giving a few lines from one of his miscellaneous writings that may still more directly prove the poet was a patriot—and from his position in the court during so many years, necessarily an influential one. Let the reader remember the state of England during the reign of Richard II., and then ponder on the courage of him who could write thus in the 'Ballad sent to King Richard.'

Truth is put down, reasón is holdè fable,
Virtue hath now no dominatïon,
Pity is exiled, no man is merciáble,
Through covetise is blent discretïon,
The world hath made a permutatïon
From right to wrong, from truth to fickleness,
That all is lost for lack of stedfastness ;

who could add,

Prince, desire to be honóurable,
Cherish thy folk, and hate extortïon, etc. ;

and who could impress on all classes of men, that Truth, Virtue, Manliness, Gentleness, and Love were the only qualities worthy of respect ; high birth, fortune and success being worthless in comparison.

In a word, Chaucer alone was to England nearly all that Boccaccio and Froissart, Petrarch and Dante, were to Italy and the neighbouring countries about the same period.

And how stands the case between Chaucer and *us*—putting aside matters of a merely historical interest, what do we find he has done for us and pos'erity? We may answer, with a pardonable exaggeration Everything ! He founded alike our language and our literature, each act indeed being indispensable to the other. From the semi-barbarous medley of Saxon and Norman French that existed when Chaucer began to write, he selected whatever his profound learning and perfect poetical taste taught him were best fitted for his purposes, and thus by his writings fixed and defined at once and for ever what had been previously in a state of continual fluxion and uncertainty.

How well, and therefore how completely, Chaucer did this, is strikingly evident when we compare his language with the language of him who is esteemed the most mechanically-perfect of modern English authors. Thus in the 'Merchant's Tale' he makes January say,

CHAUCER.

Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree
That blossometh ere the fruit ywaxen be ;
A blossomy tree is neither dry nor dead,
I feel me nowhere hoar but on my head ;
Mine heart and all my limbès be as green
As laurel through the year is for to seen.

Now what can be done to improve this by

POPE?

Think not my virtue lost, tho' time has shed
These reverend honours on my hoary head ;

Thus trees are crown'd with blossoms white as snow,
The vital sap then rising from below;
Old as I am, my lusty limbs appear
Like winter greens that flourish all the year.

Many similar illustrations have been already given in our pages. And we need say no more to show that no very *essential* improvement in language can have taken place, when we see that a Dryden and a Pope suffer so frequently by the contrast of their writings with Chaucer's original.

And in saying Chaucer founded our language, we must not forget what mighty deductions are and may be involved in the statement. It is the *English* language of which this is said—the language that if ever any one tongue shall become the common familiar property of the world, it must be this!

Chaucer found his country without a literature; he left it rich in the possession of works, especially the 'Canterbury Tales,' that not only rival to this hour the greatest productions of human genius, but that have *confessedly* influenced in a direct and powerful degree the minds of his most illustrious successors. Spenser has told us how he drank of Chaucer's "well of English undefiled;" Shakspere has not only delighted to borrow individual character from him, as in his 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' where the Host is a frank imitation of Harry Bailly, but to be indebted to him greatly through one entire play, the 'Troilus and Cressida;' while Milton has with charming poetical earnestness expressed his heartfelt desire

To call up him who left half told
The story of Cambúscan bold.

And, in conclusion, as the chief part of this literature, we think Chaucer has a powerful claim to be regarded as the true founder of our drama. *Its spirit at its best is his to this hour*: the form alone was wanting—and for that the times he lived in were not prepared. What but the form of tragedy is wanting to the exquisite 'Pardoner's Tale?'—what but the *form* of the romantic drama is wanting to the 'Knight's Tale?'—what but the form of comedy in its highest vein is wanting to the 'Merchant's Tale?'—or to the whole body of *characters* that make up the 'Pilgrims of the Prologue?'—what but the form of farce is wanting to the 'Miller's' or the 'Reve's Tales?' Are not all these tales eminently, characteristically dramatic?—is there a single quality essential to the Drama absent?

THE END.

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